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Heirloom beans



**38** Pork tenderloin is at its best with a great grilling method and an easy fruit salsa.

- ◆ Quick (under 45 minutes)
- ◆ Make ahead
- ◆ Vegetarian
- ◆ Baking



42 "A warm pasta salad has a lot more flavor than a cold one," says Tony Rosenfeld.

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**Pam Anderson** ("Foolproof Pork Tenderloin", p. 38)

doesn't just test a recipe; she tests, tweaks, retests, and tests again until she's confident that she's created the most delicious dish possible with the least amount of unnecessary work for the cook. Because her results are so successful, Pam has a huge fan club, all who eagerly awaited her third book, just

published in May by Houghton-Mifflin. *CookSmart: Perfect Recipes for Every Day*, a collection of 100 new (tested and retested) favorite dishes, is the follow-up to *The Perfect Recipe* and *How to Cook Without a Book*. When she's not contributing to *Fine Cooking* (this is her fifth article) or writing her monthly column for *USA Weekend*, she's in her kitchen testing or on the road teaching.

**Lynne Sampson** ("Guide to Fresh Herbs," p. 10B) was immersed in cooking with herbs while working at The Herbfarm Restaurant in Woodinville, Washington. The recipient of IACP and Women Chefs & Restaurateurs scholarships in bread baking, Lynne is writing a bread cookbook with Daniel Leader from her new home in the mountains of eastern Oregon.

**Tony Rosenfeld** ("Tiny Pastas, Big Flavor," p. 42) was working as a regular contributor to the *Boston Globe's* food section and moonlighting as a line cook at Boston's esteemed L'Espalier restaurant when he wrote an article for *Fine Cooking*. We were so impressed with his writing skills and food knowledge that we tapped him to become *Fine Cooking's* new assistant editor.

"The recipes in this story really are the way I like to eat on summer weeknights," says **Abigail Johnson Dodge** ("Dinner Salads," p. 45). She decided one day last summer that her old favorite—chef salad—needed a facelift and got



so inspired that she revamped her entire repertoire of dinner salads. Abby, a contributing editor for *Fine Cooking*, is the author of *Great Fruit Desserts*, *Williams Sonoma Cooking for Kids*, and *Williams Sonoma Dessert* (pub-

lished this past March). She also wrote the New England and Mid-Atlantic portions of *Savoring America*, due out this fall from Oxmoor House.

**Brigid Callinan** ("Fruit Crisps," p. 50) was the pastry chef at Mustards Grill in Yountville, California, for four years before becoming the culinary program manager for Copia, the American Center for Wine, Food, and the Arts in 2000. Brigid graduated Phi Beta Kappa from the University of Idaho, and then went east to study cooking at the New England Culinary Institute in Vermont. She is a co-author of the *Mustards Grill Napa Valley Cookbook*.



By day, **Susie Middleton** is *Fine Cooking's* executive editor. By night, she's busy subjecting her family and friends to the countless vegetable recipes she's constantly developing. For "Grilled Vegetables" (p. 54), Susie finally made the leap from charcoal grilling to gas grilling.

**Greg Higgins** ("Chef vs. Chef," p. 62) is the chef-owner of Higgins restaurant in Portland, Oregon. An avid bicycle racer who was originally trained as a printmaker, Greg also had a strong interest in cooking, so he headed to France to work and study, and the rest is history. Greg has

been an active force in rallying American chefs to commit to regional and sustainable agriculture, and he's a member of the National Board of Overseers for the Chefs Collaborative.

**Gary Danko** is the chef-owner of Restaurant Gary Danko in San Francisco. He has worked in all facets of the restaurant industry, even as a dishwasher and busboy. Gary trained at the Culinary Institute of America at Hyde Park and also studied under Madeleine Kamman, who picked him for a prestigious internship at the Beringer School for American Chefs, where he later became an instructor. Before opening Gary Danko, he was the executive chef at the Ritz Carlton in San Francisco and before that, at Chateau Souverain Winery in Geyserville, California.

If you were to open the refrigerator of **Steven Raichlen** ("Quick Sauces for the Grill," p. 59) on any given weeknight, you'd find an array of zippy homemade salsas, sauces, and vinaigrettes at the ready.



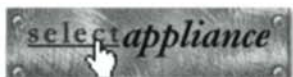
Steven is the author of *Barbecue Bible: Sauces, Rubs & Marinades*. Visit him on his web site ([www.barbecuebible.com](http://www.barbecuebible.com)) or at his Barbecue University Cooking School at The Greenbrier resort in West Virginia.

**Regan Daley** ("Blueberry Desserts," p. 65) has worked both the sweet and savory sides of some of Toronto's best restaurants, including the highly acclaimed Avalon, where she was the restaurant's first pastry chef. In 1995, she left restaurants in order to write. The idea for *In The Sweet Kitchen* crystallized when she worked at a cookbook shop in Toronto. "I was looking for a book that approached baking from the point of view of ingredients and flavors, rather than techniques or recipes," Regan said. That book didn't exist, so she wrote it herself. The result—an epic with



nearly 300 pages of ingredient profiles and more than 150 recipes—was published in Canada in 2000. After winning the IACP Cookbook of the Year award, *In The Sweet Kitchen* was snapped up by a U.S. publisher (Artisan) as well.





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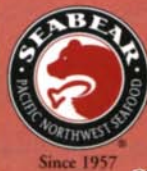
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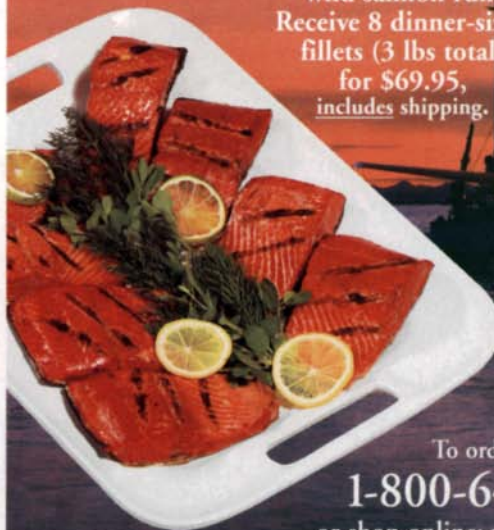


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## from the editor

### WELCOME TO THE FRESH, NEW *FINE COOKING*

We're excited to show you the design update we've mentioned in past issues, and to introduce some valuable new features. We hope the changes will give our community of readers even more inspiring and relevant information to use at the market and in the kitchen.

While keeping our signature straightforward approach, we're putting a few fresh touches on our pages to make sure that our well-tested, delicious recipes are easily accessible and that our articles are as rich with valuable cooking information as possible.

We're most excited about our new departments. In this first issue, "In Season" offers more than a dozen suggestions for cooking zucchini, along with tips on choosing, handling, and growing your own. "Equipment" tackles the challenge of evaluating blenders, with editors' picks as well as tips on buying and using blenders (next issue: nonstick skillet). And in the back of the magazine, you'll find "From Our Test Kitchen," which is our opportunity to share the discoveries we make as we develop and test our recipes. Test kitchen manager Jennifer Armentrout and the other editors contribute recipes, techniques, insights, and good ideas that we pick up from our talented authors and from our investigations. Please let us know how you like this new expression of our long-time mission to bring you all the information you need to make your cooking more accomplished, satisfying, and fun.

—Martha Holmberg, editor in chief

### Where's the salt?

May I point out an error in your article on salt (*Fine Cooking* #49, p. 65)? DiamondCrystal.com is not the place to go if looking for Diamond Crystal salt. Go figure. It's actually [www.cargillsalt.com](http://www.cargillsalt.com). It took me about 20 minutes of futzing around DC's site to find that information.

—Deanna Figueroa, via e-mail

### Where are your ethics?

I'm disappointed with the ethics of Michele Anna Jordan based on her article "The Power of Salt" in the *Fine Cooking* #49. On p. 66, she states "I recommend Diamond Crystal brand..." You should note that several recipes are credited to her on the back of the Diamond Crystal kosher salt box. This shame-

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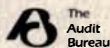
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less plug should not have been allowed.

Since this issue of *Fine Cooking* was the first one I received, can I expect more hidden and unethical promotions in future editions? Looking forward to your reply. Thank you.

—D. Colotti,  
via e-mail

**Editors' reply:** Thank you for pointing out that our salt author has a connection with the Diamond Crystal brand. Let me assure you that what you can expect more of in future issues is better editing, but certainly no "hidden and unethical promotions." We should have been aware of Michele Anna Jordan's link to Diamond Crystal—she didn't try to conceal it from us; we just never asked. The reason her recommendation of this brand didn't ring any bells with the editors about possible conflict of interest is because we ourselves prefer Diamond Crystal kosher salt; it's the brand we use in our test kitchen, and many of us use it at home. Other brands, like Morton, are also good, but we find the texture of Diamond Crystal slightly more friable and easier to dissolve.

### **Great minds think alike—about garlic**

I really enjoyed "Mellow Garlic Without Roasting" (*Fine Cooking* #49, p. 62), as I have recently discovered this technique on my own. I like to use the garlic-infused oil to make croutons for soups or salads. I toss a few cups of bread cubes with the oil and bake for 15 to 20 minutes at 350°F.

However, for this purpose, I have been cooking the garlic with half olive oil, half butter, salt, and pepper. I will certainly try cooking the garlic with oil alone, as the resulting garlic-flavored oil seems to have more

applications. Thanks for a wonderful magazine.

—Carrie Kozlowski,  
via e-mail

### **Enjoy great caramel sooner by using your oven**

You can shorten the time for making the toffee caramel in your Banoffee tart recipe (*Fine Cooking* #50, p. 54) even further by baking the caramel in a bain marie (a water bath) in the oven instead of on the stovetop.

Heat the oven to 400°F. Pour a 14-ounce can of sweetened condensed milk into a 9-inch pie plate. Cover with aluminum foil and place in a shallow pan, filling that with enough hot water to come halfway up the sides of the pie plate. Bake for 1½ hours, checking occasionally to see if more hot water is needed. Uncover and stir.

—Lisa Brisch, chef-owner,  
Dinner Thyme Personal  
Chef Service, via e-mail

### **Why take chances with your curd?**

The recipe for lemon bars (*Fine Cooking* #49, p. 53) was sensational and successful, but I was surprised that neither the chef, Joanne Chang, nor the magazine mentioned an exact way to judge when the curd mixture "coats the spoon." Though a very experienced baker, I find this term confusing but easily demystified with a 165°F reading on a thermometer. Nevertheless, a great recipe.

—Fran Enslein,  
via e-mail

### **Getting the facts straight about fresh fish**

Your article on fish storage and cooking (*Food Science, Fine Cooking* #50, p. 28) was interesting, though the explanation of the cause of rigor mortis was partially incorrect. While it is true that rigor mortis is caused

by continuous muscle contraction (or, more correctly, muscle fiber cross-bridges attaching and then not releasing), the cause of the contraction is not the release of lactic acid. Instead, the cause of the continuous contraction is the depletion of cellular ATP levels (ATP is the energy carrier of the cell).

Muscles contract when cross-bridges in their fibers attach and move, and ATP is used in this process to release the cross-bridges after they have attached and to "re-cock" the cross-bridges for another bout of movement.

When an organism dies, however, the ATP level in its muscle cells slowly decreases until all the ATP is exhausted some time significantly after death. When the cells run out of ATP, the muscle fiber cross-bridges can still attach (since this requires no ATP), but can no longer release since ATP is used to release the cross-bridges. Thus the muscles stay permanently contracted for some time.

This mechanism explains why minimizing fish struggle will increase the time before rigor mortis, since fish that don't struggle much will have relatively higher levels of cellular ATP than those that do struggle, thus delaying cellular exhaustion of ATP.

Hope this helps clarify things.

—Marc Perkins  
Mesa, Arizona ♦

Here's the place to share your thoughts on our recent articles or your food and cooking philosophies. Send your comments to Letters, *Fine Cooking*, PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506, or by e-mail to [fc@taunton.com](mailto:fc@taunton.com).

## *<sup>fine</sup>* Cooking ...around the country

**May 6-10:** *Fine Cooking's* culinary ambassador Jennifer Bushman teaches cooking classes at Central Market Cooking Schools in Texas on May 6 in **Houston**, May 7 in **Fort Worth**, May 8 in **Plano**, May 9 in **Austin**, and May 10 in **San Antonio**. For information, call 512-206-1014.

**May 11:** Contributing editor Molly Stevens talks about *Fine Cooking's* June/July issue on "Table Talk with Annie Capps," WTKK at 96.9 FM in **Boston** at 4 P.M.

**May 15:** Editor-in-chief Martha Holmberg and executive chef Katy Sparks demonstrate a seasonal menu featuring artisanal ingredients at De Gustibus Cooking School at Macy's in **New York City**. For information and reservations call 212-439-1714.

**Mid-May:** The Cook Street School of Fine Cooking in **Denver** presents a class based on articles in the June/July issue of *Fine Cooking*. For information, call 303-308-9300.

**June 8 and July 22:** Hear senior editor Amy Albert talk about food, wine, and *Fine Cooking* on "The Cooking Couple" show, radio stations WPLM 1390 AM and WBNW 1120 AM in the **Boston** area. The segments air at 10:18 A.M.

**Plus:** In the **Seattle** area, listen for contributing editor Abby Dodge on Brian Poor's "Poor Man's Kitchen" on KOMO radio. If you're in the Southwest, tune into Jennifer Bushman's "Nothing to It" television program to see demonstrations of recipes from *Fine Cooking*. The show airs on selected NBC and Fox stations in **Nevada, Arizona, Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho**. Check local listings for times.



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# Cooking summer squash, deliciously

BY RUTH LIVELY

**Z**ucchini plants taking over your garden? Neighbors leaving bags of squash on your doorstep in the dead of night? Don't worry. Summer squash may be prolific growers, but in the kitchen they're the stars of salads, sautés, pastas, and more.

When summer squash and zucchini are in season, I find myself cooking with them again and again because they're so versatile. As long as you make a couple of smart decisions about which ones to use and how to cut them, squash will be a fresh, bright ingredient in all kinds of summer meals.

Whether you're choosing from the garden or the produce counter, pick small, firm squash, with a tight feel to them. Smaller

squash are more tender because the skin is still thin and the seeds are unformed; they also contain less water than older squash.

After a gentle scrub under the faucet (I use a plastic surgical scrubber; see p. 80 for sources), the squash is ready to cut. I never peel summer squash. Besides contributing color and nutrients, the skin helps the vegetable hold together better when cooked.

**I cut the squash in different shapes, depending on how I'm using it.** A medium dice ( $\frac{1}{3}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch) is perfect for sautés, but for a more refined look, or to add to a dish during just the last few minutes of cooking, I'll cut the squash into a small ( $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch) dice. Round or half-moon slices are good for soups and gratins. I julienne squash for stir-fries and slaws. For layering in a lasagna and for frying, I cut whole squash into thin, lengthwise slices. With my trusty Boerner V-Slicer (see p. 80 for sources), I can make long zucchini strings, which I toss into soups or cook lightly and coat with a dressing to serve as a side dish.

## Summer squash into summer meals

Probably my favorite summer squash preparation is a quick sauté with a southwestern touch (see the recipe on p. 16), but I don't stop there. Here are some suggestions for turning zucchini into great summer meals:

**FOR A QUICK GRATIN**, layer thin slices of yellow and green patty-pan squash and tomato in an oiled shallow baking dish. Season well with salt, pepper, and minced fresh herbs like basil, oregano, marjoram, and summer savory. Sprinkle with bread-crumbs and grated Parmesan, drizzle with olive oil, and bake until golden.

**SIMMER A SUMMER STEW** of zucchini, tomatoes, sweet onions, bell peppers, and corn or hominy. Season with cumin, fresh oregano, and chopped or puréed roasted mild chiles like poblanos. Garnish with sour cream and chopped fresh cilantro.

**MAKE A COLORFUL SLAW** by tossing blanched julienned squash, red and yellow bell peppers, and carrots with blanched baby green beans. Dress with a vinaigrette of olive oil, red-wine vinegar, and Dijon mustard.

**MAKE A QUICK, PRETTY ASIAN-STYLE SOUP** by simmering chicken broth with a piece of lemongrass, a pinch of red chile flakes, and thinly sliced shiitakes. A few minutes before serving, add long strings of summer squash. Garnish with sliced scallions, cilantro, and lime juice.

**LIGHTEN A TRADITIONAL LASAGNA** by nestling blanched lengthwise slices of zucchini on top of meat sauce, or use the slices as a layer with béchamel and cheese in a vegetarian lasagna.

**FOR A FRESH-TASTING RISOTTO**, add diced zucchini, where it adds a background vegetal element without upstaging the rice.



**Part salsa, part side dish.** This bright-tasting sauté of zucchini, corn, and peppers (recipe, p. 16) gets a boost from cilantro and lime.



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Add medium-size dice in the middle of cooking, or small dice close to the end (especially pretty with dark-skinned zucchini). Fold in a bit of lemon zest and chives at the end.

**BAKE A SAVORY TART.** Fill a pastry shell with a mixture of ricotta cheese, beaten egg, grated zucchini, chopped parsley, and grated Romano and Parmesan. Bake until set and golden brown. Delicious hot, warm, or cold.

**FOR A SIMPLE SAUTÉ,** heat olive oil, add diced zucchini, season with salt and

pepper, and cook, tossing, until lightly browned but still firm. Off the heat, add some chopped fresh mint, basil, or thyme and a splash of lemon juice or white-wine vinegar.

**TRY THIS FLAVORFUL SALAD** as a side dish or base for grilled fish: Briefly steam long strands or matchsticks of squash and toss with an Asian-flavored dressing that includes soy sauce, toasted sesame oil, sherry, grated ginger, and a bit of lemon juice.

**FOR A FRITTATA,** sauté diced or grated squash briefly with garlic and a little chopped onion. Add chopped basil and beaten eggs and bake until puffed.

**MAKE A PRETTY SALAD** from long, wide ribbons of tender raw squash tossed in a balsamic-Dijon vinaigrette. Use a vegetable peeler to make the ribbons.

**FOR A TWIST ON RATATOUILLE,** grill small whole squash or lengthwise halves of larger ones until just tender. Cut into small chunks and toss with grilled and cut eggplant, peppers, mushrooms, and onions. Moisten with olive oil, and season with salt, pepper, lemon juice, minced garlic, and chopped basil.

**FOR A VEGETARIAN CURRY,** sauté large dice or chunky slices of summer squash, onion, carrots, potato, bell pepper, and broccoli with red curry paste, and then simmer in coconut milk.

*Ruth Lively's two greatest passions are cooking and gardening. She is the former senior editor of Kitchen Gardener magazine. ♦*



## Harvest sweet, tender squash and blossoms from your own garden

Summer squash are easy to grow, though they do require some space. Once the weather and soil have warmed, plant seeds or young plants in a sunny area of the garden. Within a few weeks, you'll be harvesting. When the fruits are the size you want (check every day, as they grow quickly), cut—don't pull—them from the plant, using a small, sharp knife.

Squash plants produce separate male and female flowers. The male blossoms stand atop tall, thin stems; the female flowers are borne close to the plant, and often have baby fruits already formed below them. Either can be harvested, but if you pick female blossoms, you'll sacrifice potential squash.

Harvest squash blossoms early in the day, dip them in a bowl of cool water to rinse away dust, and then shake gently to dry. Pinch off the stamen in the center of each flower. Cut the yellow flowers crosswise into a chiffonade and use as a garnish or fry them whole, filled or not (I like goat cheese seasoned with fresh herbs). Twist the petal tips to close them, dip in an egg beaten with a little milk, roll in cornmeal, and fry until golden.



### Southwestern Squash Sauté

*Serves four to six as a side dish.*

This sauté is a good partner to grilled fish, chicken, or steak. With the addition of some cheese and a sliver of ripe avocado, you get a wonderful filling for quesadillas and soft tacos. I often vary the heat, from mild to spicy, by adding a little chile paste.

- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 medium onion, diced
- Kosher salt
- 1 medium red bell pepper, diced
- 3 small or 2 medium zucchini or summer squash (about 1 pound), cut in medium (½-inch) dice
- 1 large ear fresh corn, kernels cut from the cob
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 large or 2 small fresh hot chiles (such as serrano or jalapeño), seeded and minced, or 1 mild green chile (such as poblano or Anaheim), roasted, peeled, seeded, and diced
- Freshly ground black pepper to taste
- ½ teaspoon ground cumin
- ¼ teaspoon chili powder (optional)
- 1 to 2 tablespoons roughly chopped fresh cilantro
- ½ lime

Set a large skillet over medium-high heat. When hot, add 2 tablespoons of the oil and let it heat. Add the onion, season with a little salt, and sauté until translucent, about 2 minutes. Add the diced red pepper and a little more salt and sauté for another 1 to 2 minutes. Transfer the pepper and onion to a bowl or plate. Turn the heat to high, add 1 more tablespoon oil and the squash. Season with salt and sauté for 3 or 4 minutes, stirring only occasionally, so that it begins to brown lightly and the flesh turns slightly translucent and is pleasantly tender (don't overcook; it should still be toothy, not mushy). Put the peppers and onions back in the pan, add the corn, garlic, and chiles, season again with salt, and sauté a few minutes more. Season with a few grinds of pepper, the cumin, and the chili powder (if using). Toss in the cilantro, squeeze the lime over all, toss, and serve.



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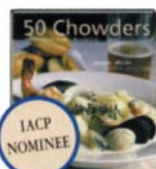
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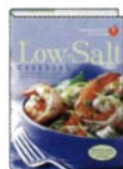
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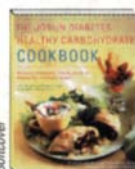
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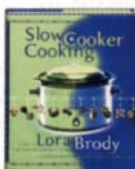
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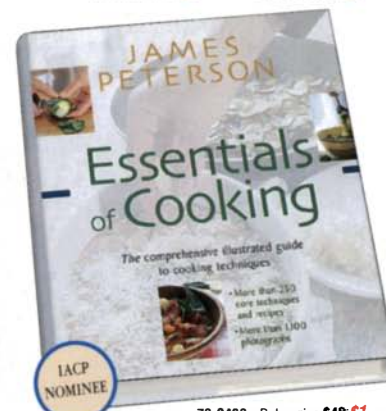
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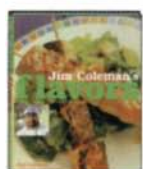
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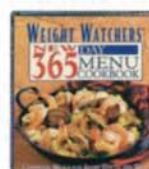
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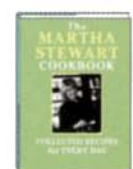
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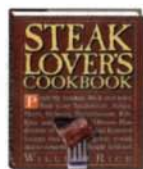
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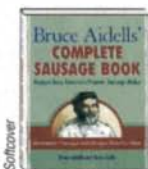
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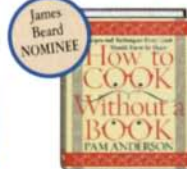
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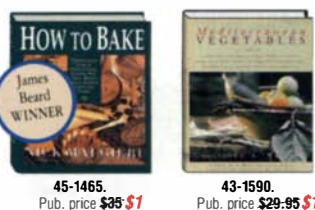
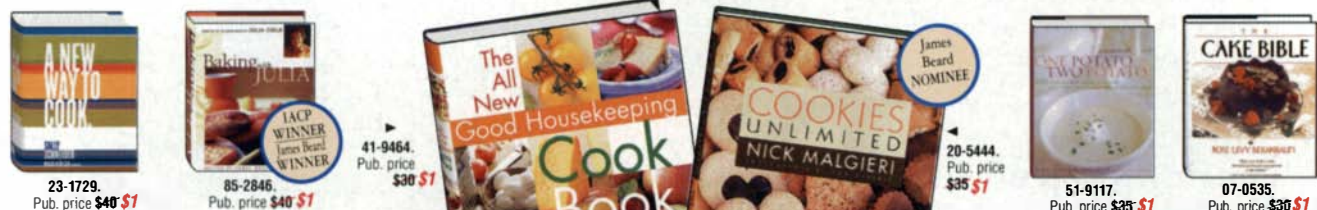


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READER SERVICE NO. 80

# The buzz on blenders

BY MARYELLEN DRISCOLL

**B**uying a blender can be a mind-boggling pursuit. Nearly every small kitchen appliance manufacturer makes at least one blender (one popular brand name has 15 different models). And while some blenders seem like they'll never change, others are so technologically advanced that they require instruction manuals that are 20 pages long.

Careful comparison shopping will only get you so far. The best way to measure a blender's performance is to put it to the test. So we bought and tested ten major brand-name blenders ranging from \$19.99 to \$149. We ran each through the paces. We made smoothies and orange slushes (for the recipes, see p. 72). We crushed plain ice. We puréed two types of soup and made pesto and mayonnaise. In the end, four blenders rose to the top.

## Blending tips

In the process of researching and testing blenders, we learned that a lot of good blenders will splatter, leak, jam, and even break because of common user errors. The following are some basic do's and don'ts of blending.

- ❖ Load liquids and soft ingredients first, solid ingredients last. Solids should be no larger than 1-inch chunks.
- ❖ When you can, start slow and gradually build speed to lessen motor stress.
- ❖ Use the pulse button, if available, when blending frozen drinks.
- ❖ Immediately stop blending when ingredients jam.
- ❖ To blend hot ingredients without splattering, remove the cap on the lid's fill hole and wrap a thick dishtowel over the lid; add a minimal amount of liquid; start at a low speed and increase gradually. (Ideally, let hot ingredients cool before blending.)
- ❖ Never wiggle the jar to jostle lodged ingredients when the blender is running.
- ❖ To prevent jams when adding ice cubes or frozen fruit, drop the cubes or fruit one at a time through the lid's fill hole while the blender is running.

## TOP PICK

We tested ten widely available blenders, with glass or polycarbonate jars, that were under \$200. Based on their power, sensibility, and ease of use, we chose four winners.

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**BEST AT:** Unlike the other nine blenders, it actually crushes plain ice, automatically pulsing and reversing the blade so that the cubes are tossed up like a salad to avoid jamming. It's remarkable.

**FEATURES WE LIKED:** Six sharp blades set at three different angles; the programmed blending cycles are smart and really work; refined manual controls. Note: We didn't test any of the machine's recipes.

**QUIBBLES:** The unique reverse mode is programmed only, it can't be manually operated; the pulse function starts slow; almost too many buttons and choices.

(Continued)



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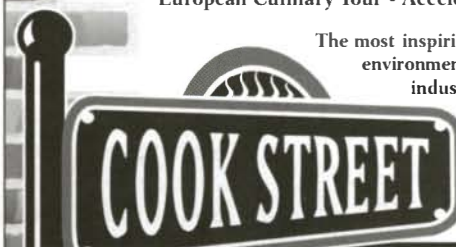
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## How to buy a blender

There are key attributes to look for in every blender. Before you select one, look at a demo or ask to have the model taken out of the box to consider the following:

**Speeds:** A wide range of speeds doesn't guarantee great performance. We do recommend a pulse option, preferably one that will pulse at more than one speed. An ice-crushing feature is like a pulse function with more muscle; it helps when making frozen drinks. Most blenders, however, just don't effectively crush plain ice regardless of this feature.

**Jar design:** It was no coincidence that all of our top picks had tapered jars. We found that with the wide, straight-sided jars, ingredients stuck in place more often: smoothies tended to need a lot of manual stirring to break up clogs, and when we made pesto, large strips of basil and chunks of garlic would sit on the ledge at the jar base where the blade would never reach them.

**Ease of use:** Touchpad function keys may be easy to clean, but they can often be frustrating to use. Some models require you to press three

buttons—"on," the function command, and "off"—every time you want to start and stop. Press buttons can be just as annoying, depending on the design. Again, try a demo to see what feels right for you.

**Noise:** Price won't buy you peace. One of the more expensive blenders we tested was so loud we couldn't hear a timer go off in front of it. If you can, test a store model.

**Cleaning:** For the easiest cleaning, look for jars that can be disassembled and popped in the dishwasher. Just don't

put the blades in the dishwasher. As with knives, the edges will eventually dull. It can often be just as easy to fill the blender jar halfway with warm, sudsy water, run it at a high speed for ten seconds, and then rinse.

**Power:** More wattage doesn't necessarily mean a more powerful motor. Wattage is a measure of the amount of power it takes to run the motor. A particularly efficient motor might require less wattage.

*Maryellen Driscoll is an editor at large for Fine Cooking.* ♦

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**BEST AT:** Frozen drinks—it bulldozed through the tough spots.

**FEATURES WE LIKED:** An easy-to-use dial setting with five speeds plus a pulse option; extra-large jar that's easy to grip and not too heavy; triangular shape of the jar lets you pour cleanly from three different positions; jar locks snugly into the base and is easy to assemble and disassemble.

**QUIBBLES:** You won't find a slow speed; it's all brawn.

### Best value



**Hamilton  
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400-watt motor  
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We tested three blenders in this price range. This was the only one that pulled in a solid performance across the board. There are no bells or whistles, but it gets the job done. Also available in white.

**BEST AT:** Solid, consistent performance.

**FEATURES WE LIKED:** The ice breaker and pulse functions; wide collar on base of the jar prevents tipping; easy-to-use press buttons.

**QUIBBLES:** Fourteen speeds—more than really necessary; pulse runs at only one speed; jar is on the smaller side.

### Oldie but goodie



**Waring  
Professional**

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glass jar  
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800-492-7464  
[www.waringproducts.com](http://www.waringproducts.com)

Aside from the lure of its classic, eye-catching style, this machine works with remarkable grace. Its blending of frozen drinks was solid, steady, and impressive.

**BEST AT:** It puréed seamlessly and made the best pesto—smooth, nicely aerated, and bright green in color.

**FEATURES WE LIKED:** A simple toggle switch; just two speeds, low and high (nothing more ever seemed needed); the jar fits snug in a solid, well-weighted base.


**QUIBBLES:** Made a soupy mayonnaise; jar is on the smaller side.



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# From Jamaica, spicy barbecue chicken

BY MARK A. HENRY

For most people, Jamaica brings to mind beautiful beaches and reggae music. But when I think of Jamaica, my thoughts drift first to the island's spicy, delicious cuisine, especially jerk chicken. Jerk is a dry, spicy method of cooking meat (usually chicken or pork), and it's also the name of the hot, bitter, and sweet seasoning mixture that flavors the meat. The heat comes from Scotch bonnet chiles and fresh ginger, the bitterness from allspice and cloves, and the sweetness from cinnamon, onions, and scallions.

When I visit Jamaica, my favorite place to eat traditional jerk chicken is in Boston Bay. The guys in this northeastern region are jerk experts. Over a shallow pit in the ground, they build a rack of allspice tree branches. For fuel, they use more allspice branches (those that were used as racks the previous day), along with other wood. They butterfly a whole chicken, rub it with jerk seasoning, and cook it on the rack over a gentle fire. They cover the chicken with wood planks to trap the aroma and contribute

even more smoky flavor. Using a big fork, the cook lifts and turns the chicken in one fluid motion, and then he shakes, or jerks, the fork free. (Some say this act of removing the fork is where jerk got its name, but I have my doubts.)

As much as I love Boston Bay jerk chicken, it's a bit of a project to make at home. So my version uses chicken pieces instead of a butterflied bird and a grill instead of a pit. To mimic the smoky flavor of allspice branches, I've increased the allspice in the seasoning. Most Jamaicans



## Jamaican Jerk Chicken

*Serves six; yields about 2 cups seasoning.*

If you like very spicy food, add another chile. A typical Jamaican accompaniment is rice and peas; see [www.finecooking.com](http://www.finecooking.com) for a recipe.

### FOR THE JERK SEASONING:

- 14 whole cloves
- 4 heaping teaspoons whole allspice berries
- 2 medium onions, roughly chopped
- 4 scallions (white and green parts), roughly chopped
- 1 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves, lightly chopped
- 2 Scotch bonnet chiles (or 2 habaneros), cores, seeds, and ribs removed
- ½ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1½-inch piece fresh ginger (about 1 ounce), washed (but not peeled) and sliced
- 2 tablespoons kosher salt
- 1 tablespoon freshly ground black pepper
- 6 cloves garlic

### FOR THE CHICKEN:

- 3 teaspoons vegetable oil
- 6 chicken leg quarters (about 5¼ pounds total), excess fat removed

**Make the jerk seasoning:** Crush the cloves and allspice in a mortar (or put them in a plastic bag and crush them with a rolling pin) to break the berries. Put these and the remaining ingredients in a food processor or blender. Process or blend for a few minutes until puréed to a somewhat coarse paste; scrape the sides as necessary (avoid inhaling the



wouldn't be shy about using several Scotch bonnet chiles, but I've cut back the amount in the recipe below to tame the heat.

In addition to being a terrific marinade for grilled chicken or pork, jerk seasoning adds a note of complexity to stews, soups, and roasts, or even sauces. If you're using the seasoning on grilled fish or seafood, use only a light coating and marinate for no more than 5 or 10 minutes.

*Mark A. Henry, the banquet chef at the Bethesda Marriott, grew up on his mother's Jamaican food.* ♦

## Books

To learn more about jerk and Jamaican cooking, Mark Henry recommends *Jerk: Barbecue from Jamaica*, by Helen Willinsky, and *The Real Taste of Jamaica*, by Enid Donaldson.

potent fumes). Put in a clean container, cover, and refrigerate for up to three months.

**Grill the chicken:** Mix about  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup of the jerk paste with the vegetable oil in a bowl. Rub the paste all over the chicken, including under the skin, so it's lightly coated. Refrigerate for 30 minutes to 1 hour.

Meanwhile, prepare the grill. For charcoal, start the coals in a chimney starter, and when they're glowing, after about 30 minutes, dump them out and spread in an even layer. For gas grills, set two burners to medium hot and another to medium.

When the coals are medium-hot or the gas grill is ready, put the chicken, skin side down, over the hotter part of the grill (cover the grill, if using gas). When the skin has begun to brown, after about 2 minutes, rotate each piece slightly so the skin doesn't burn or stick. When the skin browns more, after about another 2 minutes, turn each piece over. Grill until the second side is browned, about another 4 minutes. Move the chicken to the cooler part of the grill (you might want to turn one gas burner down to medium to accommodate all the pieces) and cover. Grill until an instant-read thermometer inserted in the thigh reads 165°F (or cut into the joint and check that the juices run clear), another 10 to 20 minutes. If the non-skin side starts to burn, turn it back over to the skin side, or move it to a cooler spot. Let the chicken rest, covered, for 5 minutes before serving.

## Jerk seasoning ingredients

Depending on the amount of onions and scallions used, jerk seasoning can be a dry rub or a moister paste. Regardless, the seasoning should include these four ingredients:

### Allspice

Known also as pimento and Jamaica pepper, allspice is indigenous to Jamaica. In fact, the island is one of the world's largest suppliers of the spice. The berries look like peppercorns but taste like a blend of cinnamon, nutmeg, and cloves, hence the name. In jerk seasoning, allspice delivers a nutty, slightly bitter flavor. Jamaicans usually buy whole berries and crack or grind them when needed, which is often. Allspice makes an appearance in almost every savory Jamaican dish I can think of, as well as in some alcoholic drinks.



### Scotch bonnet chiles

One of the hottest chiles in the world (some say *the* hottest), Scotch bonnets are irregularly shaped with color ranging in shades of green, yellow, orange, and red. This small chile looks very much like a habanero, which is sold in most supermarkets and which is a fine substitute. If you do find Scotch bonnets in the market, use care when handling them: wear gloves, remove the seeds and veins, and consider using less to start with. Some people claim to pick up a hint of sweetness through the fiery punch, but all I ever get is the punch.



### Fresh ginger

Jamaicans mainly use this bumpy rhizome fresh rather than as a ground powder. They're meticulous about washing it but not about peeling it, and they often leave the skin on. When I do peel ginger, I use the edge of a spoon instead of a knife because it's easier, safer, and doesn't waste any of the fibrous flesh. Jamaican ginger has a distinctive aroma and a spicy, sweet flavor that's much more pungent than what's sold in U.S. markets.



### Thyme

If there's one herb that's predominant in Jamaican cuisine, it's thyme. In jerk seasoning, as in most Jamaican dishes, thyme doesn't shout its presence but in a quiet way brings out the best in everything else.



## Is quick-cooking cornmeal nutritious?

I like to eat a bowl of instant polenta with maple syrup for breakfast, but I wonder, does it have less nutritional value than its long-cooking counterpart?

—Margaret Hanson, via e-mail

**A** **Karen C. Duester replies:** A corn-processing specialist with the Archer Daniels Midland company explains that the different processing methods to produce quick-cooking corn cereals generally don't lower the cereal's nutritional values. Grinding the grain finer doesn't alter the nutritional makeup unless parts of the grain are intentionally discarded. Precooking the grain has no effect on the nutrients in the corn, as they're heat stable and locked into the corn structure, so they won't leach out into the water during precooking. Finally, chemically treating the grains with citric acid (a natural component of citrus fruits) enhances water absorption, causing the grain to absorb water more rapidly; this shortens the cooking time, but doesn't significantly change the grain's nutritional properties.

*Karen C. Duester, MS, RD, a registered dietitian, is the president of The Food Consulting Company in Del Mar, California.*

## Try olive oil for deep-frying

Is it all right to use olive oil for deep-frying? I've heard that it can impart a strong flavor. Is this true?

—Maggie Parker, via e-mail

**A** **Peggy Knickerbocker replies:** A good bulk extra-virgin olive oil is a fine choice for deep-frying, but the next grade down, just plain olive oil, is even better since it's cheaper. When olive oil is used for frying, it imparts little or no flavor to foods because it remains stable at a fairly high temperature. Therefore, olive oil is able to accomplish the important frying tasks of sealing in moisture while simultaneously creating a crisp crust. Since the application of heat removes the fruity character of olive oil, there's no point in using expensive extra-virgin oil for frying.

When deep-frying, keep the oil's temperature between 350° and 365°F; check by using a candy or deep-frying thermometer attached to the side of the pot.

Don't put too many pieces of food into the oil at once or the temperature of the oil will drop and you won't get crisp, golden brown results. If the oil is at the right temperature, very little oil will penetrate the food, and there will be almost as much oil left in the pan when you're finished as when you began.

*Peggy Knickerbocker is the author of Olive Oil: From Tree to Table.*

## How to make homemade mayonnaise, safely

Is there a way to make mayonnaise that eliminates the risk of salmonella? Pasteurized eggs exist, but they can be expensive and hard to find. Are there other options?

—Sandy Prenatt, Belmont, Massachusetts

**A** **Molly Stevens replies:** Since the chances of a fresh, uncracked egg actually containing salmonella bacteria are slim (only one egg in 20,000, according to the American Egg Board), any risk of food-borne illness resulting from eating raw or lightly cooked eggs is most likely to be caused by improper handling. Follow the same precautions you would use with any perishable food: store eggs in the refrigerator, don't let them (or the mayonnaise) sit out for more than thirty minutes, and be sure to thoroughly wash your hands and anything else that comes in contact with the raw eggs.

A further step towards eliminating the risk of salmonella is through a technique for "home pasteurization"—a process that destroys the bacteria without actually cooking the egg. In a heavy saucepan, combine the egg yolks for the mayonnaise recipe with the liquid (such as vinegar or lemon juice). You need at least two tablespoons of liquid per egg yolk; if your recipe calls for less than this, add water to make up the difference. Cook over very low heat, constantly stirring and scraping the bottom, until the yolks thicken slightly and coat the back of a spoon. If you check with an instant-read thermometer, the yolks will be close to 160°F. Immediately put the base of the pan in an ice-water bath and stir to cool before proceeding with your recipe. Expect this process to take a while—10 to 15 minutes—but don't be tempted to speed it up or you'll end up with a pan full of scrambled eggs.

*Molly Stevens is a contributing editor to Fine Cooking and a co-author of One Potato, Two Potato. ♦*

Have a question of general interest about cooking? Send it to Q&A, *Fine Cooking*, PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506, or by e-mail to [fc@taunton.com](mailto:fc@taunton.com) and we'll find a cooking professional with the answer.





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READER SERVICE NO. 82

# Bargain sparkling wines for summer drinking

BY TIM GAISER

**T**here's a lot more to sparkling wine than just what's made in the Champagne region of France. Good bubbly is made all over the world, and you can buy a tasty bottle for less than half the price of nonvintage Champagne. In the spirit of refreshing summer sipping and deliciously versatile wine, here's a rundown of my favorite non-Champagne sparkling wines, which are as

good for apéritifs as they are for serving with light summer meals.

## Cremant from France

Champagne aside, there's more fine-quality sparkling wine produced in France than anywhere else in the world. *Cremant*, which refers to any non-Champagne French sparkling wine, is actually made using the Champagne method (now called *méthode traditionnelle*, or *metodo classico* in Italy), where the secondary fermentation takes place in the bottle, not in a tank. From the Southwest of France come Blanquette de Limoux and Cremant de Limoux, blends of the local Mauzac grape as well as Chardonnay and Chenin Blanc. Both offer bright lemon-citrus and toasty flavors and are some of the best sparkling wine values around. And from the Alsace region comes Cremant d'Alsace, a blend of mostly Pinot Blanc grapes. Cremant d'Alsace is similar in style to nonvintage Champagne but without quite the depth, earthiness, and com-

plexity. All these wines are long on drinkability and easy on the pocketbook.

## Cava from Spain

Champagne's major competition in the world of sparkling wine is Spain. *Cava*, as it's known in Spain, is often made in the *méthode traditionnelle*, with blends of indigenous grapes such as Macabeo, Xarel-lo, and Parellada. They're not exactly household names, but the unique quality of these grape varieties is precisely what gives cava its exotic, spicy melon/peach fruit and mouth-watering crispness.

## Prosecco from Italy

Italy is another great source for inexpensive and delicious sparkling wines. Prosecco is produced from the Prosecco grape using the Charmat process, where the secondary fermentation is induced in stainless-steel tanks (as opposed to *méthode traditionnelle*). The wines are available both fully sparkling (called *spumante*) and lightly sparkling versions (called *frizzante*), and



## Delicious matches for sparkling wines

Seafood and salty foods are especially good partners for these light sparklers. Here are some of my favorites:

- ❖ Cheese straws and spiced nuts.
- ❖ An omelet with smoked salmon, capers, and red onion.
- ❖ Seared scallops with a lime vinaigrette or a lime compound butter.
- ❖ Smoked chicken or smoked turkey sandwiches.
- ❖ An antipasto plate with olives, dry sausage, grilled vegetables, and mild hard cheeses.



the combination of bright pear/citrus fruit and nutty qualities makes Prosecco an irresistible apéritif, especially with antipasto.

Lambrusco, made from the grape of the same name, is a red Italian sparkler you shouldn't miss, even though its reputation has suffered over the last two decades because of inexpensive mass-market brands (for a good bet, see the sidebar at right). Lambrusco is made slightly sweet or dry, and its tart, juicy fruit and lively acidity make it another good candidate for casual summer drinking.

### Good buys from the New World

Many Champagne houses came over from France to invest big money in California during the 1970s and '80s, resulting in some of the better non-Champagne

sparkling wines on the market. Sadly, you can't call them bargains anymore: spiraling costs of vineyard property and exorbitant grape prices have pushed the price of the average nonvintage California sparkler near the realm of nonvintage Champagne. As a result, places like Washington State have jumped in, making good bargain bubbly using quality fruit and the méthode traditionnelle to create wines that are priced to enjoy every day. And as with other wines, Australia is providing tough competition for everyone, producing some delicious sparklers for a fraction of what everyone else is charging. For more bargains, see the sidebar at right.

*Tim Gaiser, a master sommelier, is a contributing editor to Fine Cooking.* ♦

## Sparkling bargains to seek out

Serve all sparkling wine chilled to 45°F; if it's any colder, you won't be able to taste it. Two hours in the refrigerator or 30 minutes in a bucket of ice water will suffice. Always use flute-shaped glasses to show off those bubbles, rather than the sherbet type, which kills the bubbles.

### France

- ❖ Domaine J. Laurens Brut, Blanquette de Limoux, \$12
- ❖ Maison Guinot, Cremant de Limoux, \$14
- ❖ Meyer-Fonné Brut, Cremant d'Alsace, \$12
- ❖ Pierre Sparr Brut, Cremant d'Alsace, \$15

### Italy

- ❖ Bisol Prosecco di Valdobbiadene, \$15
- ❖ Ruggieri Prosecco di Valdobbiadene Frizzante, \$12
- ❖ 1999 Barbolini Lambrusco Grasperossa di Castelvetro, \$11

### Spain

- ❖ Cristalino Brut, \$7
- ❖ Segura Viudas Brut, Cava "Aria," \$10

### Australia

- ❖ 1999 Seaview Brut, \$12
- ❖ Yalumba Angas Brut, Méthode Champenoise, \$7
- ❖ Seppelt, Great Western Brut Reserve, \$7

### United States

- ❖ Domaine Ste. Michelle Blanc de Blancs, \$8
- ❖ Domaine Ste. Michelle Brut Cuvée, \$8

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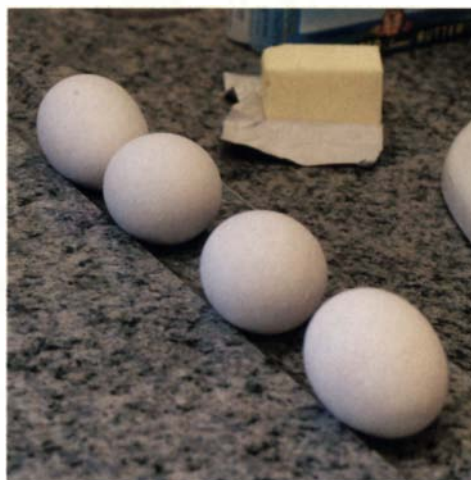


## The well-conceived details of a baker's kitchen

BY AMY ALBERT

**A**sk devoted bakers about Flo Braker and they'll probably tell you she's the author of *The Simple Art of Perfect Baking* and *Sweet Miniatures*, a founding member of The Baker's Dozen, and a co-author of *The Baker's Dozen Cookbook*. They might also mention that Flo has mentored countless professional and home bakers. (I once heard a pastry chef admiringly dub her "the patron saint of all pastry makers in this country.") Flo's kitchen in her house in Palo Alto, California, is an extension of herself and her work—practical, hard-working, and beautifully executed. Granite countertops for rolling buttery pastry are just the start of what makes "my laboratory," as Flo calls her kitchen, such an inviting, efficient, and fun place to work. And as the sun streams in, you can't help but notice that this highly functional kitchen feels pretty heavenly, too.

Amy Albert is a senior editor for Fine Cooking. ♦



**These eggs won't roll away. Run your hand over this countertop and you'll notice a channel carved out for eggs to nestle as they await entry into a cake batter, a custard, or a late-night omelet.**





**1. Storage that approaches art.** A divided drawer that's as intriguing as a shadowbox keeps artful order among small items like pastry tips, miniature biscuit cutters, and tiny cookie cutters.

**2. A ladder of shallow shelves** shows off Flo's collection of rolling pins, and it stores them neatly, too.

**3. No leaky bags or boxes.** Flour and sugar are ready to be scooped and measured with just a yank of the drawer.

**4. Adjustable plexiglass dividers** keep cake and tart pans from clanging around and getting dinged.

**5. This rolling cart does triple-duty** as moveable work surface, cooling rack, and storage for molds, stencils, and sheet pans.

Do you have a good-looking, well-functioning kitchen with ingenious, practical details that make cooking more efficient and more fun? Send a description and photos to Kitchen Detail, *Fine Cooking*, PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506 or e-mail [fc@taunton.com](mailto:fc@taunton.com).

# How to get fruit jellies and jams to gel

BY SHIRLEY O. CORRIHER



For anyone who has ever tried to make it at home, perfect fruit jelly can seem like a truly elusive substance. When it works, you end up with a quivering solid of beautiful, translucent color and great fruit flavor. When it doesn't, you get a runny (though still flavorful) syrup.

To make jelly, you cook crushed fruit with water until it's soft and starting to lose its color, strain out the solids, and simmer the juice, adding sugar. Then you boil until the liquid reaches 220° to 222°F, or until it thickens enough to fall in a sheet off the side of a spoon, and pour into sterilized jars. (Another doneness test is to put a small amount of the hot jelly or jam on a chilled saucer, freeze for a minute or so, and then push the cooled liquid with your finger. If it wrinkles, it's done.) Jams and pre-

serves are less work; you just boil the fruit with sugar until the mixture thickens or reaches temperature.

Sounds easy (and it is); however, sometimes fruit jelly gels and sometimes it doesn't. The key is to have enough pectin, sugar, and acid. You need all three elements in balance to get fruit jellies, jams, preserves, and marmalades to set. (To distinguish your jams from your preserves, check out a lexicon of these terms in From Our Test Kitchen on p. 72.)

## Pectin is the thickener

The most crucial ingredient in all jellies and jams is pectin, which is made up of huge molecules that occur naturally in all fruit. The goal (and the challenge) of jelly- and jam-making is to get these big pectin molecules to connect in a gel network, trapping and immobilizing the sweetened fruit juices within it.

Some fruit—tart apples, blackberries, cranberries—have plenty of pectin. Other fruit, such as peaches and apricots, don't have nearly enough to gel on their own.

**So the first step is knowing whether you have a high-pectin or low-pectin fruit** (see the table at left). If it's the latter, you've got two choices. You can supplement it with a commercial pectin, or you can add a high-pectin ingredient like lemon rind (be sure to include the pectin-rich white pith) when you boil the fruit.

For all fruit, pectin levels are highest when the fruit is mature but still slightly underripe; pectin amounts start to drop off as the fruit continues to ripen. Therefore, you'll get a better gel from almost ripe rather than from fully ripe fruit. Or you might want to use some of both, getting the higher pectin from the less ripe fruit and the more intense flavor from riper ones.

## Acid is the matchmaker

Even better than adding lemon rind and pith to the fruit is to toss in a whole slice of lemon to a small batch of fruit. The lemon juice in the pulp provides acid, which is the second essential component of any fruit jelly or jam.

## Some fruits gel better than others

Pectin content and acidity will vary depending on the ripeness, growing conditions, and variety of the fruit—berries are especially hard to pin down. This table can help you figure out whether a batch of fruit jam or jelly might need a pectin or acid boost, but keep in mind that it's an approximate guide.

Gel more		Gel less	
HIGH PECTIN, HIGH ACID	HIGH PECTIN, LOW ACID	LOW PECTIN, HIGH ACID	LOW PECTIN, LOW ACID
tart apples	sweet oranges	apricots	peaches
crabapples	tangerines	pomegranates	nectarines
cranberries	sweet apples	strawberries	pears
blackberries	ripe quince	sour cherries	blueberries
gooseberries		pineapples	ripe mangos
lemons		raspberries	sweet cherries
red currants		rhubarb	any overripe fruit
Eastern Concord grapes			



Without acidity, pectin molecules won't build that crucial gel network. Pectin molecules are charged; they repel one another just like the same ends of magnets do. Acids neutralize the charge, so the pectin molecules no longer repel one another and can join.

Fruits that are high in acid and in pectin will gel on their own, while those with lower acid levels won't. To compensate for low-acid fruits, try adding 1½ teaspoons to 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice to a small batch of jelly or jam.

**Fruits become less acidic as they ripen**, so again, from a gelling standpoint, it's best to choose those that are not fully ripe.

### Sugar ties up the water

We have one more problem to solve before we can expect a perfectly set jam or jelly. Pectin molecules would rather join with water molecules than with one another. This is where the sugar comes in. Sugar is hygroscopic—it ties up the water, making it unavailable for the pectin molecules, which now have no choice but to connect with one another.

Most jam and jelly recipes don't skimp on the sugar, so it's unlikely that you'll fall short in this area. I usually add ¾ to 1 cup sugar for every 4 cups un-reduced juice for jelly. If you add too much sugar, there's a risk that it will crystallize out of the mixture or that the jelly will become too stiff. Occasionally, even when you think you have enough pectin, acid, and sugar in the jelly or jam, it still won't set. You could try reboiling it; it may gel better the second time, and eventually, it will start to thicken through evaporation. But be aware that extended cooking (or excessive heat) can damage the

pectin and prevent gelling altogether, though having enough sugar in the mixture should help.

One more tip for gelling jellies: Calcium increases gel strength and can help ensure that a jelly sets. The easiest kitchen source of calcium that I know of is molasses, so if you expect trouble with a particular batch of fruit, you might try adding a half teaspoon of molasses to a small batch of jelly.

*Food scientist Shirley O. Corriher is a contributing editor to Fine Cooking and the author of CookWise. ♦*

**Fruit pectin  
is critical,  
but you need  
enough sugar  
and acid, too.**

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## Great potatoes by mail from Maine

If you're interested in experimenting with new and different potatoes, like Caribe and Cranberry Red, check out the tasty, colorful varieties in Wood Prairie Farm's Maine Potato Catalog (800-829-9765; [www.woodprairie.com](http://www.woodprairie.com)). The spuds come with information about the varieties and how to prepare them. A 10-pound bag is \$34.95.



## Easy oven-roasted tomatoes

Slow-roasting tomatoes gives them an intense flavor that cooks love. But if you don't have the time to slow-roast your own, try an incredibly flavorful version from Sundown Foods. These tomatoes are as versatile as store-bought sun-dried tomatoes, but they have a meatier texture and a more balanced sweetness. They're perfect for a quick pasta dinner. You can buy Sundown's oven-roasted tomatoes at Whole Foods Supermarkets around the country or directly from Sundown Foods USA (415-956-6600; [www.sundownfoods.com](http://www.sundownfoods.com)). An 8-ounce package is \$3.

## A "wooden" spoon for the 21st century

These new spoons are sturdy, colorful alternatives to their traditional wooden counterparts. The all-purpose spoons are molded from exoglass, a synthetic material that's waterproof and heat-resistant up to 430°F. The spoons won't discolor over time. Each 12-inch spoon is \$7.50 from Solutions (800-342-9988; [www.solutionscatalog.com](http://www.solutionscatalog.com)).



## Lunch at the park

What's the best way to carry fragile wineglasses and a chilled bottle of wine to a picnic? Try these lightweight padded packs, which let you transport glasses, bottles, and other picnic essentials without fear of breakage. They also come with handy tools like wine openers and cheese knives. Packs from Picnic Time (805-529-7400; [www.picnictime.com](http://www.picnictime.com)) and Picnic at Ascot (877-742-6429; [www.picnicatascot.com](http://www.picnicatascot.com)) are \$10 to \$40.





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## WINNING TIP

### A new use for an old-fashioned potato masher

My quick way to drain a can of whole tomatoes is to insert a hand-held potato masher into the opened can to hold the tomatoes in place while I pour out the juice. The potato masher can then be rinsed and put away. No need to dirty a strainer or additional dishes.

—Zoe Toner,  
Weston, Connecticut

### Slice savory tarts ahead for a neat presentation

When you're planning to serve a warm, sliced tart that can be potentially messy, like a quiche or a cheese and vegetable tart, cut the cooled tart before you reheat it. This will give you the cleanest, most presentable slices. Then just reheat it in the oven and you'll have a beautifully sliced tart to present.

—Julia Deane,  
Rowayton, Connecticut

### Handling dishtowels

In my kitchen I use many more dishtowels than paper towels, sometimes racking up four or five dirty dishtowels in a day. Instead of constantly running the used towels to the hamper down the hall, I keep them in a tiny round hamper (from the dollar store) in the corner of my kitchen. The added benefit is that while the towels in the hamper may not be clean enough to reuse to dry dishes or wipe a

counter, they can be used to mop up spills on the floor or cooking splatters from the stovetop. Every two days I dump the dishtowels from my little hamper into my big hamper to be washed.

—Sandra Leshaw,  
Riverdale, New York

### Sticky notes keep track of favorite recipes

I cut recipes out of my food magazines and recycle the rest of the issues...but *not* my *Fine Cooking* magazines, which I save whole. To remind me of dishes I absolutely must prepare, or recipes that I've come to love, I write the name of the recipe on the bottom of a sticky note and stick the note on the edge of the recipe's page. There the note stays, standing up to remind me of favorite recipes of the past and future recipes to be discovered.

—Helene Stone,  
Highland Park, Illinois

### Honey anchors small bowls onto platters

When entertaining at home, I like to pass hors d'oeuvres on trays among my guests. Many times these tidbits are accompanied by dipping sauces in little bowls. To keep the bowls from sliding around on the platters, I put a little bit of honey on the bottom of the bowls, which keeps them glued into place on the platter.

—Bill Apodaca,  
Royal Oak, Michigan

### An easier way to wash wineglasses

While having a new baby has mostly hindered my attempts at cooking, it did give me a good cleaning tip. The long, narrow brush designed for cleaning baby bottles also works great for cleaning wineglasses that you can't put in the dishwasher.

—Lea-Anne Jackson,  
Atlanta, Georgia



### Season ahead for succulent pork chops

My family loves grilled pork chops so I buy center-cut boneless chops in large family packs, which are less expensive. Then I rub the pork chops with my favorite salt-free spice mix before sealing them in one layer in zip-top bags and putting them in the freezer. Once thawed, the chops are well seasoned and ready for the grill.

—Jim Moudy,  
via e-mail

### Use flour to clean up cooking oil spills

If you spill grease or oil in the kitchen, the best way to clean it up is to sprinkle the spill generously with flour and use a dough scraper or spatula to scrape it up. This way, you aren't leaving a greasy residue and it takes a lot less effort (and fewer paper towels) to clean up the mess.

—Jennifer Denlinger,  
Clermont, Florida

### Freeze berries into ice cubes for festive drinks

At warm-weather get-togethers, I love to serve flavored iced teas and fruit juice drinks such as watermelon agua fresca and honeydew lemonade. To give the drinks an elegant yet simple garnish, I put raspberries (or other



summer berries) into ice-cube trays filled with water and freeze them. Once frozen, I pop out the ice cubes, put them into glasses, and pour the drinks on top. The result is quite pretty.

—Michaela Rosenthal,  
Woodland Hills, California

### Ice keeps potato salads fresh on a buffet table

To keep mayonnaise-based dishes such as pasta or potato salads fresh throughout a summer party, I freeze water in zip-top bags and put them into a large, foil-lined bowl. Then I cover the ice packs with a clean dishtowel and a large sheet of foil, making sure the dishtowel is completely covered. The salad can then be spooned on top. This also works well with hamburger condiments, fruit salad, cold cuts, and desserts.

—Angel Ryan,  
Bonita, California

### Save cabinet space by nesting pans

To save storage space in my small kitchen, I keep all my pans in three stacks in my kitchen cabinet. My saucepans, sauté pans, and frying pans nest inside one another, resulting in compact stacks that take up only the shelf space of three pans. If a pan has a nonstick finish, I'll throw in a couple of sheets of paper towels to keep the coating from getting scratched. (Non-skid shelf liners work great, too.) Whenever I'm shopping for a new pan, I look for one that can be stacked with my old pans.

—S. Schieving,  
via e-mail

### Slice eggplant with a serrated knife

Eggplant is hard to cut with a regular chef's knife unless the blade is really sharp; good, thin slices require a sawing action. But if you use a serrated knife



(such as a bread knife), the eggplant can be sliced paper-thin with ease.

—Danny Yang,  
Austin, Texas

### A better way to toss a green salad

Usually when I toss a green salad or a pasta salad, it ends up truly tossed about the kitchen while the salad dressing remains unevenly distributed. Now I use two lightweight stainless-steel bowls of different sizes and put the salad fixings and dressing in the larger bowl while inverting the smaller bowl to cover the top. Clasping the top and bottom bowls together with my hands, I shake them vertically for about 20 seconds. There's no mess, and the dressing is evenly spread throughout the salad. Remove the smaller bowl and serve the salad in the larger one, which has a clean rim, free of dressing.

—Michael Bakken,  
Fresno, California

### Cook corn on the cob in an asparagus steamer

I've found that my asparagus steamer is great for steaming or boiling other vegetables too, especially sweet summer corn. Three regular or four small ears fit perfectly.

—Sally Bushwaller,  
Chicago, Illinois ♦

#### HOW TO ENTER & WIN

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# Foolproof Grilled Pork Tenderloin

The secret to perfectly cooked pork tenderloin—well seared, juicy, and fully cooked—is all in the timing; brining, glazes, and sauces add extra flavor

BY PAM ANDERSON

In theory, pork tenderloin is the perfect cut. It's dressy enough to be served at an elegant dinner party, yet casual enough for weeknight supper. It's substantial enough to be treated like red meat, yet mild enough to stand in for chicken or fish. It's economical, healthy, readily available. Even its small size is attractive—except when you try to cook it. From my experience, pork tenderloin is just a little too small to be treated like a roast and a little too big to be treated like a steak.

## Create the perfect crust

After much experimentation, I've concluded that grilling pork tenderloin in a covered gas grill solves the problem. (I rarely go to the trouble to light a charcoal fire for two pork tenderloins, but you can of course use this method with charcoal; see the note in the recipe at right.) A gas grill heated to high with the lid down can effectively cook a pork tenderloin directly (like a steak) and indirectly (like a roast) simultaneously.

Grilling pork tenderloins this way works well, but it can be a little tricky. The key is to get this odd cut seared and fully cooked as quickly as possible, before it has a chance to dry out. To develop an impressive crust (and to keep the grill from losing heat), I've found that the tenderloins should be turned only once.

If the grill has been preheated for ten minutes and all burners are on high, the tenderloins should be fully

## "7-6-5" Grilled Pork Tenderloin

*Serves four to five.*

This master grilling recipe works perfectly, no matter how you flavor the pork. Choose one of the glazes I suggest for a beautiful crust, or use your own favorite dry rub, as long as it's low in salt. Be sure to buy pork tenderloins that haven't been treated or soaked in any kind of solution by the producer.

**2 pork tenderloins (about 2 pounds total), brined as described below right**  
**1 recipe concentrated fruit glaze of your choice (see p. 40), or other seasoning**  
**Freshly ground black pepper to taste**

Rub the brined tenderloins all over with the glaze and then season with the pepper. Or, season to taste with another flavoring of your choice.

Heat a gas grill, turning all the burners to high until the grill is fully heated, 10 to 15 minutes.

Put the pork on the hot grill grate. Close the lid and grill for 7 minutes. Turn the pork over, close the lid, and grill for another 6 minutes. Turn off the heat (keep the lid closed) and continue to cook the pork for another 5 minutes. At this point, an instant-read thermometer inserted into the middle of the thickest end of the tenderloin should read 145° to 150°F. (If not, close the lid and let the pork continue to roast in the

residual grill heat.) Remove the pork from the grill and let rest for 5 minutes before carving. Cut across the grain into ½-inch slices and serve immediately.

**Note to charcoal grill users:** I developed this method for the gas grill, but the same principles apply to charcoal grilling. Your results might vary, though, depending on how hot and how consistent your fire is. To use a charcoal grill, prepare a two-zone fire, banking all the coals to one side of the grill. Use a wire brush to clean the grill rack and then brush it lightly with oil; close the lid and wait to let the air inside the grill get hot again. Position the pork directly over the hot coals, cook (covered) until nicely seared on both sides, turning only once, and then move them to the coolest part of the grill (over no coals), again with the lid closed, for the last 5 minutes.

## Quick-brining pork tenderloin

For 2 tenderloins: In a medium bowl, mix ½ cup kosher salt and ½ cup sugar with 1 quart cool water until dissolved.

Trim the tenderloins of excess fat and silverskin and submerge them in the brine; let stand about 45 minutes. Remove the pork from the brine, rinse thoroughly, and pat dry.





**7 minutes** of direct, high heat on the first side is just the right amount of time for a perfect sear. Keep the grill covered.



**6 minutes** on the second side—keeping the fire hot—means the whole tenderloin is now nicely crusted.



**5 minutes** with the heat turned off and the lid down allows the tenderloin to finish roasting to an internal temperature of 145° to 150°F.



seared with appetizing grill marks on one side in just seven minutes. Since the second side has already started to cook, it doesn't take as long to sear as the first side. In fact, if left for the same amount of time, it would start to char. So the second side should look the same as the first side in just six minutes.

At this point, the tenderloins are fully seared, but they will probably only register 125° to 130°F at their thickest parts—not done yet. Clearly they don't need more direct heat. The tenderloins are so close to being done at this point and the grill is so hot that I simply turn off the grill and, in five minutes, the residual heat will fully cook them. For me, “fully cooked” means that a meat thermometer inserted into the thickest section of the pork registers 145° to 150°F. Thus, the name of my grilled pork tenderloin: “7-6-5”—seven minutes on the first side, six minutes on the second, and then five minutes with the grill turned off and the lid closed. The method is so reliable that I can set a timer and go about my business. I don't even have to worry about a grill flare-up: pork tenderloins are lean enough so that there's no threat of dripping fat.

### For the best flavor, brine first

Pork tenderloins may have the texture of red meat, but their flavor isn't quite as exciting. For this reason, I've found that soaking them in a salt-sugar brine helps immensely. Depending on my schedule, I've developed two brine strengths. When I'm in a hurry, I use the stronger brine and soak the pork tenderloins for just 45 minutes. With this brine strength, the tenderloins tend to taste a little salty on the surface, so I rinse them and pat them dry.

If I have more time, I halve the amounts of sugar and salt in the brine recipe and soak the tenderloins for 1½ hours. With this weaker brine, I've found the tenderloins don't need to be rinsed. I simply pat them dry. Either way, brining not only improves the flavor but also helps the pork stay juicy.

For extra flavor and an even better crust, I brush the tenderloins with a fruit juice concentrate. I've found that, besides adding flavor to the pork, this also creates a subtly sweet surface that browns and caramelizes, resulting in an even more impressive crust. I've used three different concentrates—orange, apple, and pineapple—in three different glazes (at right) to demonstrate their use, but you shouldn't feel locked into these recipes. Feel free to change and interchange concentrates, spices, and herbs. For example, rosemary is equally good with orange or pineapple. Chili powder and cumin are great with orange juice. Try sage or herbes de Provence with any of the concentrates.

## Glazes add extra flavor



### Sweet Chili Glaze

*Yields enough to glaze two pork tenderloins.*

2 teaspoons vegetable oil  
2 teaspoons chili powder  
½ teaspoon ground cumin  
¼ cup frozen pineapple juice concentrate, thawed

In a small saucepan, heat the oil, chili powder, and cumin over medium heat. When the mixture starts to sizzle and the spices are fragrant, add the concentrate. Simmer until the mixture reduces to about 2 tablespoons. Set aside to cool slightly.

### Rosemary-Orange Glaze

*Yields enough to glaze two pork tenderloins.*

This glaze is equally good made with 2 teaspoons dried rubbed sage instead of the rosemary.

¼ cup frozen orange juice concentrate, thawed  
1 teaspoon brown sugar  
4 teaspoons minced fresh rosemary

In a small saucepan, bring the concentrate, brown sugar, and rosemary to a simmer. Simmer until the mixture reduces to about 2 tablespoons. Set aside to cool slightly.

### Curry-Apple Glaze

*Yields enough to glaze two pork tenderloins.*

2 teaspoons vegetable oil  
1 tablespoon curry powder  
¼ cup frozen apple juice concentrate, thawed

In a small saucepan over medium heat, heat the oil and curry powder. When the mixture starts to sizzle and the curry is fragrant, add the concentrate. Simmer until the mixture reduces to about 3 tablespoons. Set aside to cool slightly.

For a simple alternative to the fruit glazes, I like to just rub the brined pork with 3 tablespoons Dijon mustard and then sprinkle with cracked black pepper.



## For a knockout presentation, make a quick sauce or a colorful salsa

### All-Purpose Fruit Salsa

*Serves four to five.*

This salsa can accompany any of the pork dishes here and can be made with nearly any fruit: peaches, nectarines, grapes, oranges (or a mix of oranges and grapefruit), apricots, plums, pineapple, mangos, tomatoes, or avocados. You could also use fresh corn kernels, cooked and cooled first.

- 1½ cups fruit (see the note above), cut into small dice, or cooked corn kernels
- ¼ medium red onion, cut into small dice, or 2 scallions (white and light green parts), thinly sliced
- ¼ yellow or red bell pepper, cut into small dice
- 1 fresh jalapeño or other hot chile, cored, seeded, and minced
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh cilantro or parsley
- 2 tablespoons fresh lime juice or rice vinegar
- ½ teaspoon ground cumin or chili powder (optional)
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Mix all the ingredients, including salt and pepper to taste, in a medium bowl. Let stand for 10 to 15 minutes to allow the flavors to blend.



### Orange Balsamic Sauce

*Yields about ⅓ cup.*

I like to pair this tangy sauce with rosemary-orange-glazed tenderloins.

- 1 teaspoon vegetable oil or olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- ½ teaspoon minced fresh rosemary
- ⅓ cup orange marmalade
- 4 teaspoons balsamic vinegar

Heat the oil in a small saucepan over medium heat. Add the garlic and rosemary and cook until fragrant and sizzling, about 30 seconds. Stir in the marmalade and vinegar. Heat until warm. After slicing the pork, add any juices from the carving board to the sauce before serving. Pass separately when serving the pork tenderloins.

### Mango Chutney Sauce

*Yields about ⅓ cup.*

This pungent sweet-and-sour sauce complements curry-apple-glazed tenderloins.

- ⅓ cup Major Grey's chutney
- 4 teaspoons rice vinegar
- Freshly ground black pepper to taste
- 1 teaspoon minced fresh cilantro (optional)

Combine all the ingredients. Pass the sauce separately when serving the pork tenderloins.

*Pam Anderson developed her favorite method for cooking pork tenderloin while working on her latest book, CookSmart, just published in May by Houghton Mifflin. ♦*



## drink choices

### Try ale, vibrant whites, or light reds with your pork tenderloin

A recipe's sauce or marinade can often be the dominant factor when it comes to pairing wine with the finished dish, and it's surely the case with these tasty fruit-juice-based glazes. While most pork tenderloin recipes would have me reaching for a hearty red, the oak and tannins in a big red wine would taste clumsy and dull next to the vibrant fruit and spice flavors

here. But there are plenty of other options. Ale is a good all-purpose bet for any of these fruit glazes, provided that the ale is richly flavored. I'd go for Red Hook or Anchor Liberty—both are available in supermarkets.

If you want to tailor your drink choices to suit each particular recipe, here's what I would do. With the curry-apple glaze, consider an

Alsace Pinot Blanc. The wine's apple fruit and the pork glaze's sweet-spicy flavors would be delicious together; try the 1999 Marcel Deiss Bennwihr (\$15). With the rosemary-orange glaze, try a slightly chilled Grenache blend with little or no oak. The savory and citrus spices in the glaze will highlight the youthful fruit in Grenache; look for the 2000 d'Arenberg

"Stump Jump" (\$10) from Australia and the 1999 Côtes du Rhône "Parallèle 45" from Paul Jaboulet (\$9). And instead of wine with the sweet chili glaze, try a rich Belgian ale. I like Chimay Red (\$3.50 for a 330ml bottle) and the Affligem Tripel (\$7.50 for a 750ml bottle).

—Tim Gaiser, a master sommelier, is a contributing editor to Fine Cooking.

# Tiny Pastas, Big Flavors

## Ditalini with Tomatoes, Capers & Lemon Oil

*Serves eight to ten as a side dish.*

This is a simple version of the puttanesca sauce native to Naples, minus the anchovies. You'll have some lemon oil left over; use it in salads, salsas, or meat marinades.

Kosher salt  
1 lemon  
½ cup plus 1 tablespoon olive oil  
2 cloves garlic, smashed  
Large pinch crushed red chile flakes  
1 can (14½ ounces) high-quality diced tomatoes, with their juices  
2 heaping tablespoons drained capers, rinsed and roughly chopped  
½ cup tightly packed pitted Gaeta or kalamata olives, roughly chopped  
1 pound dried ditalini (or other small pasta)  
Freshly ground black pepper  
¼ cup thinly sliced chives

Bring a large pot of well-salted water to a boil. Using a peeler, gently skim wide strips of the zest from the lemon. Put the ½ cup olive oil in a small saucepan and set it over medium heat. When the oil is about 210°F (it should bubble lightly if you lower a strip of zest into it)—about 1 minute—add the strips of zest and then take the pot off the heat. When the oil is cool, strain it and set it aside.

Put a 10-inch skillet over medium-high heat. When the pan is hot, add the remaining 1 tablespoon olive oil; a few seconds later, add the garlic and chile flakes and cook for about 30 seconds, swirling the pan to keep them from burning. Carefully add the tomatoes, capers, and olives. Reduce the heat to medium low. Simmer until the sauce thickens and the tomatoes start to lose their form, 8 to 10 minutes. Reserve until needed.

Cook the ditalini in the boiling water until it's just tender, about 9 minutes. Drain the pasta and put it in a large bowl. Add the hot sauce and 2 tablespoons of the lemon oil and toss well (if you like a moister pasta, add more lemon oil). Taste and season well with salt and pepper. Serve hot, warm, or at room temperature, tossing in the chives just before serving.

BY TONY ROSENFELD

I like my pasta warm, even on a scorching summer day. I don't mean to disparage the American tradition of cold pasta salads, but the things I like best about pasta and Italian cooking—vibrant flavors and delicate textures—seem to hibernate when they're chilled. The solution on a sticky summer day is to marry Italian culinary discipline with American casual entertaining. *(Continued)*



Start this dish ahead



*Assemble the components ahead in a large bowl and reserve or refrigerate until needed. Once you begin to cook the pasta, toss the greens with the vinaigrette to maximize flavor and to begin wilting them.*



*Shortly before serving, cook the pasta and drain it well. The heat of the pasta finishes wilting the salad greens and revives pantry items like sun-dried tomatoes and olives.*



*One quick toss and the salad is complete. But don't feel like you have to rush guests to the table: the flavors and textures will remain fine for a few hours.*



## Shells with Arugula, Feta & Sun-Dried Tomatoes

*Serves eight to ten as a side dish.*

If you can't find high-quality arugula (smallish leaves with no brown spots or large holes), use baby spinach instead.

### Kosher salt

**¼ pound arugula, washed (stem and rip the leaves into smaller pieces if they're large)**

**6 ounces feta cheese, crumbled**

**½ cup pitted kalamata olives (16 to 20), quartered**

**2 heaping tablespoons drained, thinly sliced oil-packed sun-dried tomatoes (or 8 sun-dried tomatoes, rehydrated in hot water and thinly sliced)**

**1 pound dried small or medium shells or orecchiette**

**1 tablespoon red-wine vinegar**

**3 tablespoons olive oil**

**Freshly ground black pepper**

**10 fresh basil leaves, cut in a chiffonade (see p. 70)**

Bring a large pot of well-salted water to a boil. Put the arugula, feta, olives, and sun-dried tomatoes in a large bowl. Reserve or refrigerate until needed.

Cook the pasta in the boiling water until it's just tender, about 9 minutes (follow the package's instructions). Meanwhile, add the vinegar and oil to the arugula salad, season liberally with salt and pepper, and toss well. Drain the pasta, add it to the salad, and toss. Check the seasonings and serve hot, warm, or at room temperature, adding the basil just before serving.





## Orzo with Shiitakes, Caramelized Onions & Spinach

*Serves eight to ten as a side dish.*

We made a variation of this side dish when I worked in the kitchen at L'Espalier restaurant in Boston, where I learned that orzo pairs wonderfully with Asian flavors.

Kosher salt  
3 tablespoons soy sauce  
1 tablespoon rice vinegar  
1 teaspoon toasted sesame oil  
5 tablespoons peanut oil  
2 cloves garlic, smashed  
1 tablespoon grated fresh ginger  
Pinch crushed red chile flakes  
6 ounces fresh shiitake mushrooms, stemmed, cleaned, and thinly sliced  
2 tablespoons dry sherry (or dry white wine)  
Freshly ground black pepper  
1 large yellow onion, finely diced  
10 ounces spinach, stemmed, washed, and coarsely chopped  
1 pound dried orzo  
2 scallions (white and green parts), thinly sliced  
1 teaspoon toasted sesame seeds (optional)  
1 lime, cut into small wedges

Bring a large pot of well-salted water to a boil. In a small bowl, whisk together the soy sauce, rice vinegar, sesame oil, and 2 tablespoons of the peanut oil.

Set a large skillet or wok over medium-high heat. When the pan is hot, pour in 1½ tablespoons of the peanut oil and, after a few seconds, add the garlic, ginger, and chile flakes. Stir for 20 seconds, making sure that the garlic doesn't burn. Add the mushrooms and stir-fry until they soften, 2 to 3 minutes. Add the sherry and cook for another 30 seconds. Season with salt and pepper and transfer the mixture to a bowl. Reduce the heat to medium, heat the remaining 1½ tablespoons oil in the pan, and add the onions. Season with salt and then sauté them, stirring often, until they're soft and slightly caramelized, 9 to 10 minutes. Add the spinach, cover the pan, and steam, shaking the pan occasionally, until the spinach wilts, about 3 minutes. Remove and discard the garlic from the mushrooms, put the mushrooms back in the pan, and toss. Remove from the heat and season lightly with salt and pepper. Reserve until needed.

Cook the orzo in the boiling water until it's just tender, about 9 minutes. Drain it well and put it in a large bowl. Add the mushroom mixture, soy vinaigrette, scallions, and sesame seeds (if using) and toss. Taste and season. Serve hot, warm, or at room temperature, with lime wedges to squeeze over the pasta.

As the mercury springs upwards and friends are about to arrive, toss prepared vegetables with still-steaming pasta for a quick, colorful side dish.

Small pastas like ditalini, orzo, shells, and orecchiette are great in pasta salads, and they fit the mood of informal summer eating. Their diminutive size makes them perfect plastic-fork food, they need little oil to prevent sticking, and their textures hold, even if left out on a picnic bench for an hour or two.

**Choose small, seasonal ingredients and full-flavored pantry items.** You can vary warm pasta salad accompaniments, but do match their size to the shape of the noodle. Vegetables, bountiful in the summer, are obvious choices. You don't even need to cook delicate, leafy greens like

arugula or baby spinach, as they will obediently wilt under the pasta's heat. Cut broccoli, cauliflower, or asparagus into smaller pieces and then blanch them in the same water as the pasta. To add flavor, soften garlic, onions, or ginger in a little oil. For more substance, sauté mushrooms or meaty vegetables like zucchini, summer squash, and eggplant.

The radiating warmth of pasta brings out the flavor of items like black olives, capers, red chile flakes, and sun-dried tomatoes. Any of these can be used interchangeably depending on your mood, what's fresh, and what's in the fridge or pantry.

To finish the dishes, warm pasta salads demand only a touch of acid as an enhancement, as all of their flavors and textures are still fresh and intact. Small pastas also have less surface area and therefore need less oil to keep from sticking, and less oil means they stay delicate and light.

*Tony Rosenfeld is an assistant editor for Fine Cooking. ♦*



# Salad for Dinner

For versatile summer meals, combine fresh greens, flavor-packed homemade dressings, and top-quality meats and cheeses

BY ABIGAIL JOHNSON DODGE

**D**inner salads get a lot of play at our house on summer weeknights. I love the freedom of pulling a few ingredients from the fridge, spending as long or as little time as I want preparing them, and ending up with a gorgeous and substantial salad that can feed however many people happen to be at the table that night. And if there's a crowd (to me, that's anything more than four people), I put them to work, too. Then I sit back, pour myself a glass of wine, and enjoy that summer breeze.

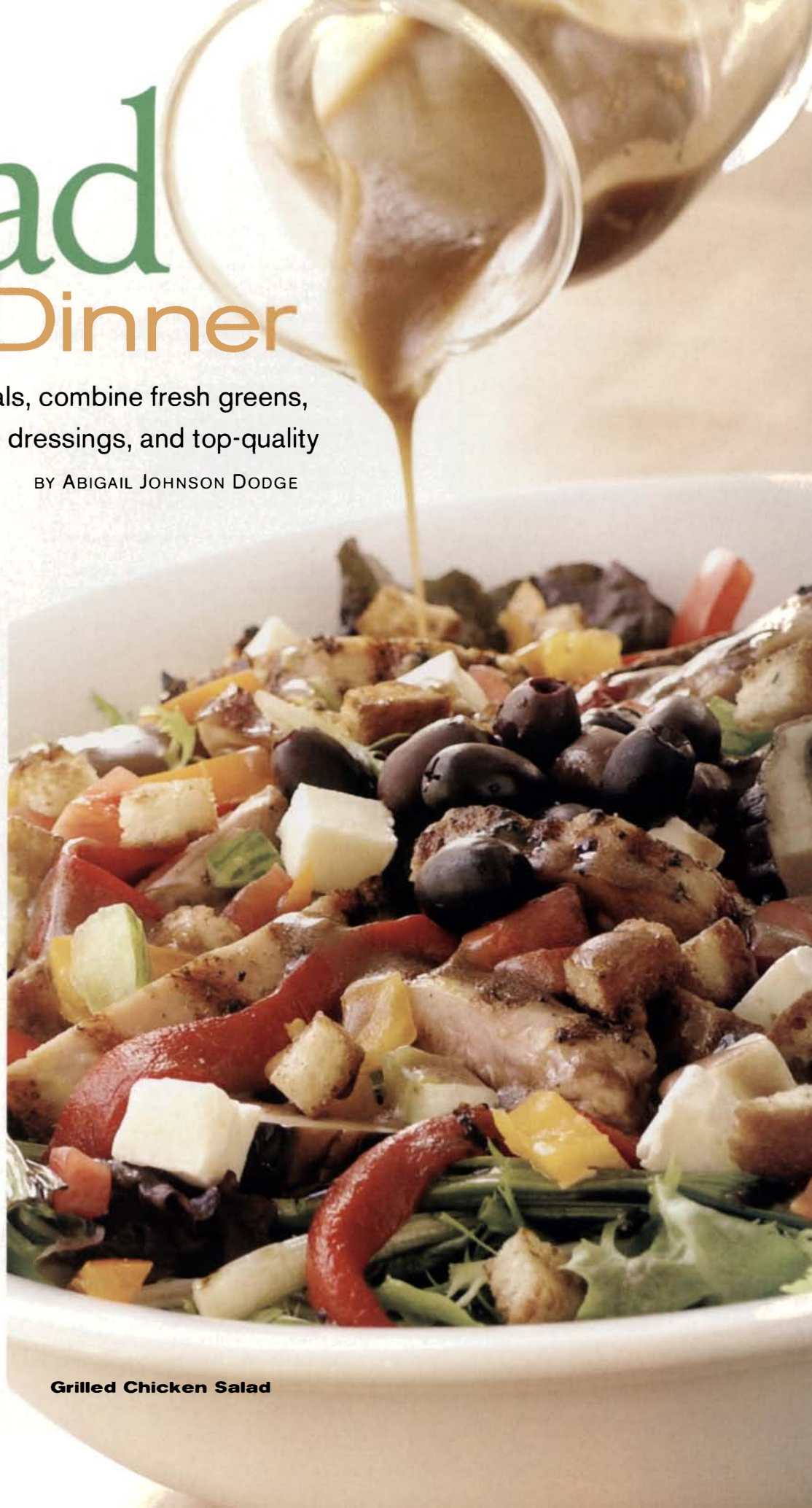
The salads here go from rustic to dressy. They offer plenty of options to please all manner of tastes, so it's easy to adjust or substitute ingredients and experiment with different combinations. I've made suggestions for which of the dressings on p. 48 to pair with each salad, but feel free to mix and match. Just remember a few keys to making a really good salad:

**Make sure the greens are fresh.**

Packaged or bulk salad mixes are fine, but the greens must be absolutely fresh.

**Make your own dressings.**

This is really easy, and the tiny bit of effort makes a huge dif-



**Grilled Chicken Salad**



ference. Store-bought dressings often have chemical emulsifiers, extra sweeteners, and other additives that will muddy and overpower your delicious salad ingredients.

#### Keep the ingredients balanced.

Include some protein, some dairy, some vegetables, or even some fruit.

#### Seek out good cheeses and deli meats.

These, as well as other top-quality prepared items, may be shortcuts, but they go a long way toward adding flavor (see the shortcuts sidebar on p. 49).

#### Give your salad some texture.

Croutons add flavor and crunch. Try the recipe at far right; it's my all-time favorite way to make croutons.

#### Dress the salads right before serving to maintain all that texture and crunch.

Since greens wilt and get soggy so fast—and salads look so beautiful undressed—I always bring my salad to the table and toss it just before serving.



**"A good salad isn't just a recipe," says Abby Dodge. "It's a combination of smart choices."**

## Updated Chef Salad

*Serves four to six.*

This chef's salad is a fresh approach to the one I remember from years ago. I like it best with the Lemon Poppyseed Dressing.

- ¼ pound thinly sliced roasted turkey breast
- ¼ pound thinly sliced smoked ham, such as Black Forest
- ¼ pound thinly sliced dry sausage, such as spicy soppressata or peppered cervelat
- 10 cups lightly packed mixed greens (I like to use a mesclun mix)
- 2 cups cherry tomatoes, halved (or quartered if large)
- 6 ounces small fresh mozzarella balls (called ciliogini or bocconcini) or whole fresh mozzarella, cut into ½-inch cubes
- 1 roasted red pepper, peeled, seeded, and thinly sliced
- 12 niçoise or other good-quality black olives, pitted
- 2 hard-cooked eggs, peeled and quartered lengthwise
- 1 recipe Garlic Croutons (far right; optional)
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
- ⅓ cup minced fresh herbs (I like a mix of parsley, mint, and chives)
- 1 cup dressing of your choice (see p. 48)

Stack the turkey slices and cut them into ¾-inch strips; repeat with the ham and the dry sausage. Toss to combine thoroughly. Put the salad greens in a large, shallow bowl. Arrange the tomatoes, mozzarella, roasted red pepper, olives, egg wedges, and croutons (if using) over the greens. Scatter the meats on top. Sprinkle the salad with salt and a few generous grinds of pepper. Drizzle with ½ cup of the dressing and sprinkle with the herbs. At the table, toss and serve the salad and pass with the remaining dressing.

#### VARIATIONS

- ❖ Instead of mozzarella, try a mild hard cheese like Muenster.
- ❖ Instead of tomatoes, try cantaloupe chunks; they're surprisingly refreshing.

## Grilled Chicken Salad

*Serves four to six.*

I love this salad, but I don't always have time to grill chicken thighs. So, when pressed, I substitute store-bought roast chicken. This one is great with the Balsamic Vinaigrette or the Creamy Black Pepper Dressing.

- ¼ cup olive oil
- 3 tablespoons Dijon mustard
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 4 boneless, skinless chicken thighs, rinsed and patted dry with paper towels
- 8 medium scallions, roots trimmed, tops trimmed so 3 inches of green remain



**Updated Chef Salad**

- 2 large portabella mushrooms, stems removed
- 8 cups lightly packed mixed greens (I like a mix of red leaf, romaine, and frisée)
- 6 ounces ripe Brie or fresh mozzarella, cut into ½-inch pieces
- 2 ripe, medium yellow tomatoes, cored, quartered, and cut into medium chunks
- 1 large roasted red bell pepper, cut into ½-inch strips
- About 12 pitted kalamata olives; more to taste
- 1 recipe Garlic Croutons (far right; optional)
- 1 cup dressing of your choice (see p. 48)

Heat a gas grill to medium high or a charcoal grill to medium hot. In a small bowl, stir to-





## Add crunch

### Garlic Croutons

*Yields about 2½ cups.*

I happen to be a fan of garlic, but if you don't like it, just leave it out; the croutons will still be great. The fresher the better, but if well sealed, these croutons will keep for two days at room temperature.

**2 tablespoons unsalted butter**  
**2 tablespoons olive oil**  
**1 clove garlic, thinly sliced**  
**4 slices bread** (I use Pepperidge Farm white), dried or stale, cut into ½- to ¾-inch cubes (to yield about 2½ cups)  
**½ teaspoon kosher salt; more to taste**

In a large skillet, combine the butter, olive oil, and garlic slices. Set over medium heat and cook, swirling the pan occasionally, until the butter is melted and sizzling but not browned.

Remove the pan from the heat and let the garlic infuse for 5 minutes. Fish out the garlic slices and discard. Reheat the skillet until the butter and oil are once again sizzling but not browned. Increase the heat to medium high and add the bread cubes. Toss with a spatula or tongs until evenly browned, 4 to 6 minutes total. Turn out the croutons onto a plate lined with paper towels, sprinkle with the salt, and set aside to cool.

gether 1 tablespoon of the olive oil, the mustard, 1 teaspoon salt, and about 5 grinds of pepper. Slather both sides of the chicken thighs with the mustard mixture. Toss the scallions and the mushrooms with the remaining olive oil, coating them well. Sprinkle with 1 teaspoon salt and several grinds of pepper. When the fire is hot, set the chicken, scallions, and mushrooms on the grate. Grill, turning once or twice, until the chicken is cooked through, about 8 minutes, and the vegetables are tender, about 4 minutes for the scallions and 8 to 10 minutes for the

mushrooms. Transfer to a clean cutting board and loosely cover with foil. At this point, you can proceed with assembling the salad while the chicken and vegetables are still warm, or you can set them aside and combine them at room temperature. Toss the salad greens in a large, shallow bowl. Cut the chicken and mushrooms into ½-inch slices; arrange on top of the greens. Scatter the scallions, cheese, tomatoes, roasted red pepper, olives, and croutons (if using) over the salad. Just before serving, sprinkle the salad with salt and a few gener-

ous grinds of pepper. Toss the salad with enough of the vinaigrette to lightly coat the ingredients (about ½ cup). Serve immediately, passing the rest of the dressing at the table.

### VARIATIONS

❖ I like to add thinly sliced grilled asparagus to this salad, too.

❖ Try tossing this salad with a little of the Balsamic Vinaigrette. After serving the salad, drizzle each portion with the Creamy Black Pepper Dressing.



## Dressings to mix and match

Any of these dressings would be great with any of the salads, but as you'll see in the salad recipes in this article, I've made specific suggestions. To make whisking easier, I set the bowl on a potholder or damp paper towels to keep it from dancing. Salad dressings are tart, of course, so the best way to taste them is to dip a lettuce leaf in the dressing.

### Lemon Poppyseed Dressing

*Yields about 1 cup.*

Juice of 1 lemon (about  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup)  
2 tablespoons heavy cream  
1 teaspoon poppyseeds  
1 teaspoon minced shallots  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon finely grated lemon zest  
 $\frac{3}{4}$  teaspoon kosher salt; more to taste  
About 5 grinds black pepper; more to taste  
 $\frac{3}{4}$  cup canola oil

In a small bowl, whisk together the lemon juice, cream, poppyseeds, shallots, lemon zest, salt, and pepper. Whisking constantly, add the oil in a slow, steady stream until completely incorporated. Adjust the seasonings to taste.

### Balsamic Vinaigrette

*Yields about 1 cup.*

3 tablespoons balsamic vinegar  
2 teaspoons Dijon mustard  
1 small clove garlic, minced  
1 teaspoon kosher salt; more to taste  
About 5 grinds black pepper; more to taste  
 $\frac{3}{4}$  cup olive oil

In a small bowl, whisk together the vinegar, mustard, garlic, salt, and pepper. Whisking constantly, add the oil in a slow, steady stream until completely incorporated. Adjust the seasonings to taste.

#### VARIATION

❖ After whisking in the oil, add 1 tablespoon each sliced fresh chives and minced fresh basil.

### Creamy Black Pepper Dressing

*Yields about 1 cup.*

$\frac{2}{3}$  cup sour cream  
 $\frac{1}{3}$  cup mayonnaise  
2 tablespoons milk  
4 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce  
 $\frac{3}{4}$  teaspoon kosher salt; more to taste  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon finely ground black pepper; more to taste  
Pinch cayenne  
1 teaspoon cider vinegar (optional)

In a small bowl, whisk together all the ingredients until smooth. Adjust the seasonings to taste, keeping in mind that the dressing should be quite peppery.

**Wait to toss this one. You'll want to show off your handiwork before tossing and serving this Cobb Salad.**

### Cobb Salad

*Serves four to six.*

This delicious salad was supposedly named in 1937 for Bob Cobb, the owner of the Brown Derby restaurant in Hollywood. As the story goes, Cobb was ravenous one night and threw together this salad, which a friend loved and named for him. I like to serve my version with the Balsamic Vinaigrette.

6 strips thickly sliced bacon  
3 boneless, skinless chicken thighs, rinsed and patted dry with paper towels  
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper  
10 cups lightly packed mixed greens (I like a mix of iceberg lettuce, arugula, and radicchio)







½ large red onion, thinly sliced  
 1 large tomato, cored, seeded, and chopped  
 1 large ripe avocado, peeled and thinly sliced  
 ⅔ cup crumbled blue cheese, such as  
 Roquefort  
 2 hard-cooked eggs, peeled and quartered  
 lengthwise  
 1 large ear fresh corn, kernels sliced off  
 ¼ cup chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley  
 1 cup dressing of your choice (at far left)

In a large skillet over medium heat, cook the bacon, turning once or twice, until evenly browned and fully crisped, about 7 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat and transfer the bacon to a plate lined with paper towels to drain and cool; reserve the skillet with the bacon drippings. Open the chicken thighs

and trim any excess fat; season with salt and pepper. Return the skillet with the drippings to medium-high heat. When the fat is hot, carefully add the thighs. Brown, turning once, until cooked through, about 4 minutes each side. Transfer the chicken to a plate to cool.

Toss the salad greens and onion in a large, shallow bowl. Cut the chicken into ½-inch slices and then into about ¾-inch-long pieces. Crumble the bacon. Arrange the chicken, bacon, tomato, avocado, blue cheese, quartered eggs, and corn in single striped sections over the salad. At this point, you can cover the salad with a damp paper towel and plastic and refrigerate it for an hour or so. Just before serving, scatter the

chopped parsley over the top. Sprinkle with salt and a few generous grinds of pepper.

Bring the salad to the table, drizzle with enough dressing to lightly coat the ingredients, about ½ cup. Toss and serve immediately, passing the rest of the dressing at the table.

#### VARIATIONS

- ❖ Use pancetta instead of bacon.
- ❖ Add fresh basil or mint leaves to the mixed greens.
- ❖ Replace the blue cheese with feta.

## Go ahead—take some shortcuts

For weeknight salads, prepared ingredients can be real timesavers. Just be sure to choose top-quality ingredients that haven't been overprocessed and that don't have a lot of extra flavors added to them.

- ❖ Roasted red peppers in a jar.
- ❖ Bulk or packaged lettuce mixes.
- ❖ Sliced turkey breast, ham, or dry sausage.
- ❖ Take-out roasted chicken.
- ❖ Frozen artichoke hearts or corn.
- ❖ Canned hearts of palm.
- ❖ Canned chickpeas or white beans.
- ❖ Toasted walnuts or pecans instead of croutons.

*Abigail Johnson Dodge is a contributing editor to Fine Cooking.* ♦

# How to Create Your

This fast, simple formula adapts to whatever fruit and flavor combination you want



BY BRIGID CALLINAN

If ever there were a surefire candidate for the grace-under-pressure award in the dessert world, it would be the humble fruit crisp. Equally appealing in summer and winter, the fruit crisp is the last-minute-dinner-party-host's best friend. Just cut up the fruit—some of my favorites are peaches, plums, nectarines, apples, pears, apricots, cherries, and berries—toss with lemon juice, sugar, and a flavoring, slide into a baking dish, and sprinkle on a quick-to-make crumbly topping. Pop

it in the oven and, in less than an hour, dessert is ready and your home is filled with the aromas of fruit, butter, sugar, and spice. No rolling, chilling, fluting, or glazing—just endless compliments and many satisfied guests. A scoop of vanilla ice cream has yet to find a more meaningful relationship.

As simple as crisps are, they're also tremendously flexible. Almost any fruit that works in a pie will work in a crisp. You can be creative, pairing peaches with ginger, for example. Or you can be a



# Own Fruit Crisp

## Building a repertoire of crisps

Feel free to experiment when assembling your own crisps. Here are a few ideas:

♦ Peaches and plums with fresh ginger.

♦ Apricots and cherries with lemon zest.

♦ Strawberries, blueberries, and raspberries with orange zest.

♦ Apples and pears with dried cherries that have been soaked in rum or Port and drained.

♦ Peaches or apricots and berries (raspberries, blueberries, or blackberries) with grated nutmeg.

early summer, peaches and berries at summer's height, and apples and pears in fall and winter. Certain fruits, such as strawberries, blueberries, blackberries, raspberries, cherries, and rhubarb, work best when they're used in combination, either with one another or with other fruit. A jumble of mixed berries or a combination of peaches and blueberries, for example, would make a delicious crisp. A crisp made with only raspberries, however, would be too mushy. Rhubarb is an extra-special case. It becomes notoriously watery when cooked and is also extremely tart. If you want to use it in a crisp, be sure to combine it with another fruit, add extra sugar, and use more cornstarch to thicken the juices (about 2 tablespoons for one crisp).

Frozen fruit isn't a good choice. The freezing compromises its texture and produces watery, mushy crisps. One exception is cranberries, which have a very low water content and therefore freeze nicely; don't thaw them before using in a crisp.

The only fruits I peel are apples and pears. Some varieties of peaches have unusually thick, fuzzy skins, in which case I'll peel them, too. But otherwise, I don't. The skin helps hold the fruit together, the fuzziness is usually lost in the cooking, and the skin gives the crisp a beautiful color.

**Aim for even-size pieces.** If the fruit is cut haphazardly, it will cook unevenly, leaving you with undercooked chunks alongside overcooked mush. No need to measure each piece and discard non-conformists, but do try for 1/2- to 3/4-inch-thick slices. Softer fruit like peaches and plums can be on the thicker side, and berries and pitted cherries can be used whole.

## Sweeten and season the fruit

Ripe, in-season fruit needs very little flavor enhancement—a bit of sugar and some lemon juice might be the only additions you'll want to make. In any case, taste the fruit before adding the sugar. It

## WHAT YOU NEED

### From the market

fruit (6 cups total)  
fresh lemon juice  
optional flavorings: dried fruit, fresh ginger, or citrus zest

### From the pantry

sugar  
butter  
dark brown sugar  
flour  
salt  
cornstarch  
optional topping ingredients: nuts, cornmeal, or oatmeal  
optional flavorings: cinnamon or nutmeg; extracts

### Equipment

mixing bowls  
8- or 9-inch square or similar-capacity glass or ceramic baking dish, or 8 small ramekins  
baking sheet

minimalist, using nothing more than fresh fruit, lemon juice, and a classic crumb topping. The formula stays the same no matter which way you go, as you'll see in the method on p. 52. Glance over it and you'll realize you don't need a formal recipe to make a crisp, just a bowl of ripe fruit for inspiration.

## Choose one fruit or two

Fruits that are in season together make great combinations; think of Bing cherries and apricots in

# Use this method for any crisp

Heat the oven to 375°F.

*Serves eight.*

## Make a topping

Use the Crunchy Crisp Topping recipe (or one of the variations) at far right and refrigerate.

## Prepare 6 cups of fruit

Choose one or two fruits and cut each into even-size pieces: ½-inch pieces for firmer fruit, ¾-inch pieces for tender fruit. Put the fruit in a bowl.

## Adjust the sweetness

Taste the fruit and sprinkle on 2 tablespoons to ⅓ cup sugar. For less ripe or tart fruit, use more sugar; for sweet, ripe fruit, use less.

## Add the thickener

In a small dish, dissolve 1 teaspoon to 1 tablespoon cornstarch in 1 tablespoon lemon juice. For juicier fruit, such as berries, use the greater amount of cornstarch. For denser fruits like apples and pears, use the lesser amount. Pour over the fruit.

## Add optional flavorings

Choose one or two spices, zests, or extracts. Gently toss into the fruit.

## Assemble and start baking

Pour the fruit mixture into an 8- or 9-inch square (or similar-capacity) glass or ceramic baking dish. Set the pan on a baking sheet to catch overflowing juices. Top the fruit with half of the topping (refrigerate the other half) and bake for 20 minutes.

## Finish baking

Sprinkle the remaining topping over the crisp and continue baking until the fruit is tender when pierced with a knife, the topping is crisp, and the juices are bubbling, another 15 to 35 minutes, depending on the fruit (apples take more time; berries take less). Let cool for 20 to 30 minutes. Serve warm.

## FRUIT OPTIONS

*These fruit are good alone or mixed:*

- ❖ Apples and pears: Peel, core, cut into ½-inch slices.
- ❖ Peaches, nectarines, plums, and apricots: Pit and cut into ¾-inch slices.

*These fruit are best mixed with each other or with one of the fruits above:*

- ❖ Strawberries: Stem, core, and quarter or halve, depending on size.
- ❖ Cherries: Stem, pit, and leave whole.
- ❖ Blueberries, raspberries, blackberries: Leave whole.

## FLAVOR OPTIONS

*Here are approximate amounts for some flavorings:*

- ❖ Grated lemon or orange zest: 1 to 2 teaspoons.
- ❖ Ground cinnamon: ½ teaspoon.
- ❖ Grated or ground nutmeg: ⅛ teaspoon.
- ❖ Grated fresh ginger: 1 to 2 teaspoons.
- ❖ Vanilla: 1 teaspoon extract or the seeds from 2 inches of a vanilla bean.
- ❖ Almond extract: ½ teaspoon.
- ❖ Dried cherries, dried cranberries, or raisins: ½ cup soaked in hot water for 10 minutes and drained.

maybe sweeter (or more tart) than you think, and too much sugar will deaden its flavor.

I know some people are adamant that fruit crisps need no added thickener, but I like to give some extra body to the thin fruit juices. I use cornstarch dissolved in lemon juice because it cooks clear and has a lighter taste and texture than flour or tapioca. The amount to add depends on the fruit. Firm fruit like apples and pears need very little—about 1 teaspoon cornstarch to 6 cups fruit. Berries fall on the other end of the spectrum.

**Use restraint when mixing in spices, extracts, zests, or dried fruit.** These ingredients can add an interesting dimension, but they're all optional. You might be tempted to throw in a little bit of everything, but I recommend limiting yourself to no more than one or two add-ins. Too many ingredients muddy the flavor and overwhelm the fruit.

**The best types of baking pan for crisps are glass or ceramic** because they're nonreactive and they heat evenly, allowing the fruit to cook gently without burning around the edges, a problem I've had with metal pans. Glass and ceramic are also attractive serving vessels. I use an 8- or 9-inch-square pan, but its shape is less important than its capacity, which should hold 6 cups of cut-up fruit in about a 1½-inch layer. You could also divide the fruit into small ramekins for individual crisps—just remember that the cooking time will be shorter.

## All that's left is to top it and bake

The toppings for crisps can be made ahead and refrigerated or frozen, but you're not gaining that much time by doing so. It only takes one bowl and about five minutes to crumble together a topping, hardly a draining effort. The butter should be slightly softened, not frozen nor soft and melting.

For the perfect buttery, crispy, crumbly topping, I use an easy-to-remember formula that's also wonderfully versatile. It starts with 1 cup flour, ½ cup butter, ½ cup dark brown sugar, and ¼ cup white sugar; you can then add oatmeal or cornmeal and nuts or spices to vary its texture and flavor.

## Bake the crumbly topping in two installments.

The topping is my favorite part of the crisp, so I blanket it on thickly. But if it's too thick, the bottom layer of topping doesn't really get crisp. The solution I've devised is to sprinkle on only half the topping, bake for 20 minutes, sprinkle on the rest, and then bake until done, another 15 to 35 minutes. This way, the first half gets a head start on browning and crisping, so you get less of a gooey layer next to the fruit.





**Individual crisps make serving a breeze. Just tuck the fruit into small ramekins, sprinkle on a topping, and bake for a shorter time.**

The total baking time for crisps depends on which fruit you've chosen and, to some extent, your personal preferences. Denser fruit like apples and pears need longer time than juicier fruit like berries, which break down quite quickly. If you like the fruit slices to retain some texture and shape rather than be soft like a compote, start checking the crisp on the earlier side; insert a knife to check the fruit for tenderness.

Crisps are best served the same day they're made, as the topping tends to absorb the fruit's juices and become soggy. If you fancy it for breakfast, however, you can reheat day-old crisp in a 400°F oven.

## Crunchy Crisp Topping

*Yields enough for one crisp.*

This is my version of the classic fruit crisp topping. It can be made up to a month ahead and frozen; use it straight out of the freezer.

**1 cup all-purpose flour**  
**½ cup packed dark brown sugar**  
**¼ cup granulated sugar**  
**Pinch salt**  
**½ teaspoon ground cinnamon or ⅛ teaspoon ground or grated nutmeg (optional)**  
**8 tablespoons slightly softened unsalted butter, cut into pieces**

Combine the flour, both sugars, salt, and cinnamon or nutmeg, if using, in a medium bowl. Rub in the butter with your fingertips until it's well blended and the mixture crumbles coarsely; it should hold together when you pinch it. Refrigerate until needed.

### OATMEAL TOPPING VARIATION

Adding oatmeal makes a more voluminous topping with a rustic, crumbly texture. Add **1 cup old-fashioned oats** to the master recipe.

### CORNMEAL TOPPING VARIATION

Cornmeal adds some unexpected crunch but makes the topping a bit less crumbly. Add **¼ cup cornmeal** to the master recipe.

### NUT TOPPING VARIATION

After rubbing in the butter, add **⅓ cup chopped walnuts, pecans, or hazelnuts, or sliced almonds** to any of the recipes above.

*Brigid Callinan is the culinary program manager for Copia, the American Center for Wine, Food & the Arts, in Napa, California. ♦*

## For the best crisp, follow these tips



**Make the topping first so it's ready to go.** Slightly softened butter rubs in easier; the topping should be well combined and crumble in clumps.



**Sweeten the fruit to your taste.** If you like sweet crisps or if the fruit is especially tart, sprinkle on extra sugar.



**Toss in extra flavors for interest,** but stick to just one or two optional ingredients so the fruit flavor shines through.



**Bake the topping in two stages so it stays crisp.** Cover the fruit with half the topping, bake for 20 minutes, and then sprinkle on the rest.





# Summer's Secret Ingredient: Grilled Vegetables

A pretty platter makes a great buffet dish

To assemble a grilled vegetable platter, arrange slices of each vegetable, overlapping slightly, in groups or rows. Choose any combination of vegetables you like (include plenty of peppers for color)

and follow the directions on pp. 57–58 for grilling them. Start with about  $\frac{3}{4}$  pound raw vegetables per person. Season the grilled vegetables with a little more salt and a few grinds of pepper and

drizzle with a bit more extra-virgin olive oil and a squeeze of lemon. Or dress the vegetables lightly with your favorite vinaigrette, or garnish with chopped fresh herbs like parsley, chives, basil, mint, or thyme.





A stash of grilled vegetables that you've made ahead lets you create delicious dishes for last-minute entertaining

BY SUSIE MIDDLETON

**A**fter many summers of grilling for my family and friends, I've developed a strategy that solves a problem (grill congestion) and opens up a great opportunity to be creative at the same time. By grilling vegetables ahead of time, I free up the grill for the steaks or chicken or burgers at dinnertime. And I give myself the chance to turn my grilled vegetables into terrific salads, side dishes, and sauces—or just arrange them nicely on a platter. Luckily, grilled vegetables are delicious at room temperature; they don't need to be served hot off the grill. And they keep well, too. Grill a few hours—or a day or two—ahead.

I've also finally made friends with the gas grill. It's not a perfect relationship—I still think everything tastes better cooked over a charcoal fire—but it certainly is a convenient one. So I've adapted my favorite recipes (pictured here and on p. 56) and my techniques for prepping and grilling (see the guide on following pages) to the gas grill. I've discovered that using a gas grill on its highest setting (of course, the more Btus, the better) with the lid down, gives excellent results.

If you do decide to grill vegetables ahead of time, here are a few storage tips. They'll be fine at room temperature for a few hours. To keep the vegetables longer, refrigerate them in layers in shallow pans. Cover each layer with plastic and store for up to two days. (Peppers and onions hold particularly well; zucchini and eggplant will still taste great but may lose some luster. The "topping" on p. 56 just gets better after a day or two.) Be sure to bring the vegetables to room temperature before serving, since their flavors will be subdued if they're cold. You can assemble the "roll-ups," "sandwiches," and platters several hours ahead, too, and keep them covered with plastic in the refrigerator.



### Grilled Zucchini & Goat Cheese Roll-Ups

*Yields 8 to 10 roll-ups.*

Make these ahead, refrigerate them if you like, and broil them briefly before serving. Serve with a first-course green salad or as a side to grilled meat, or as part of an antipasto.

**3 ounces goat cheese, at room temperature**  
**1/8 teaspoon kosher salt**  
**1 tablespoon finely chopped oil-packed sun-dried tomatoes, well drained**  
**1 teaspoon olive oil**  
**Heaping 1/2 teaspoon fresh thyme, chopped**  
**3 small zucchini, cut into 1/4-inch-thick lengthwise strips (see the photo on p. 57), grilled**  
**2 tablespoons freshly grated parmigiano reggiano**

In a bowl, combine the goat cheese, salt, sun-dried tomatoes, oil, and thyme. Spread 1 heaping teaspoon of the filling thinly over one side of each grilled zucchini strip (use a mini spatula or your fingers to spread). Roll up the zucchini (not too tightly; this is more like folding), and put them on a baking sheet lined with parchment or foil. Refrigerate if not using within an hour, but bring back to room temperature before broiling. Heat the broiler. Sprinkle with a little grated parmigiano and brown under the broiler, about 1 minute.



### Grilled Eggplant "Sandwiches" with Pesto & Mozzarella

*Yields 12 "sandwiches."*

Serve these with slices of grilled lamb, as a warm starter on their own, or with roasted or grilled tomatoes. For a change, use the goat cheese filling (in the recipe at left) instead.

**2 small (Italian) eggplant, trimmed and cut into 3/8-inch round slices (to yield about 24 pieces), grilled**  
**1/2 cup prepared basil pesto**  
**3 to 4 ounces thinly sliced fresh mozzarella, drained well on paper towels**  
**Kosher salt**  
**2 tablespoons freshly grated parmigiano reggiano**

Lay the grilled eggplant slices in one layer on a parchment- or foil-lined baking sheet (put similar-size slices next to each other). Spread each slice with a little pesto (about 1/4 teaspoon) and top every other slice with a piece of mozzarella. Sprinkle salt on the cheese and top with the other eggplant slice. Refrigerate if not serving right away. Heat the oven to 350°F. Sprinkle the sandwiches with the grated parmigiano and heat until warmed through, 4 to 5 minutes.



### Grilled Bell Pepper, Corn & Red Onion Salad with Blue Cheese Vinaigrette

*Serves six; yields  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup vinaigrette.*

This is a substantial first-course salad, but it could easily be a vegetarian main dish by serving bigger portions (add a few spears of grilled asparagus, too). Leftover dressing is terrific on grilled steak.

#### FOR THE VINAIGRETTE:

2 tablespoons sherry vinegar  
7 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon salt; more to taste  
Freshly ground black pepper  
2 tablespoons crumbled soft-textured blue cheese such as Gorgonzola or Roquefort  
1 teaspoon lightly chopped thyme leaves; more to taste  
1 small ripe plum tomato, seeded and finely diced

#### FOR THE SALAD:

4 ounces arugula, tough stems removed, washed  
1 red bell pepper, grilled  
4 large portabella caps, grilled  
1 large red onion, grilled  
2 ears corn, grilled

**Make the vinaigrette:** In a small bowl with high sides, combine the vinegar, oil, salt, pepper, and blue cheese. Stir with a fork, mashing the blue cheese against the side of the bowl until it comes apart into the vinaigrette (it won't be completely emulsified and will look somewhat grainy; you can

leave some cheese in small chunks). Add the thyme and diced tomato and stir vigorously. Taste and add more salt or thyme if you like.

**Make the salad:** Mound the arugula on six salad plates. Slice the peeled and seeded grilled pepper into  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch-wide strips. Slice the grilled portabella caps into  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch strips. Portion both vegetables evenly and put them in the center of the arugula in a loose pile. Break the grilled onion slices apart into rings and mound a few on top of the portabellas and peppers. Cut the corn off the cobs and sprinkle the kernels evenly over the six salads. Drizzle about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  tablespoons of the vinaigrette over each salad and serve. Save the extra vinaigrette for another use.

**“By grilling vegetables ahead of time, I free up the grill for the steaks or chicken or burgers at dinnertime.”**

### Versatile Grilled Pepper, Eggplant & Onion “Topping”

*Yields  $2\frac{1}{4}$  cups.*

I vary this delicious compote depending on what vegetables I have, but I never skip the onions (for their sweetness) or the eggplant (for its soft texture). It's a perfect condiment to serve with grilled or roasted pork, lamb, or beef, but it's even more versatile than that (see the serving ideas at right). It keeps in the refrigerator for several days.

1 whole red bell pepper, grilled  
1 small globe eggplant, grilled  
1 large red onion, grilled  
4 plum tomatoes, grilled  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. kosher salt; more to taste  
2 tablespoons chopped fresh mint  
2 tablespoons chopped fresh basil  
1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar  
1 tablespoon orange juice  
1 clove garlic, minced  
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil  
Freshly ground black pepper

Cut the peeled and seeded grilled bell pepper into very small dice and put it in a medium bowl. (Peel the pepper over a colander set in a bowl to capture all those delicious juices; add them too.) Dice the grilled eggplant, onion, and tomatoes and add them to the bowl. Fold in the salt, mint, basil, vinegar, orange juice, garlic, and oil. Let sit for

15 minutes. Taste and season with more salt and pepper, if you like. Serve at room temperature.

#### SERVING IDEAS:

**Grilled Vegetable Pasta:** Cook  $\frac{1}{2}$  pound dried curly pasta, drain, toss with a little olive oil and kosher salt, and add  $1\frac{1}{4}$  to  $1\frac{1}{2}$  cups of the topping. Garnish with more chopped fresh herbs and a little grated orange zest.

**Ravioli or Tortellini with Grilled Vegetable Sauce:** Gently heat 1 cup of the topping. Cook  $\frac{1}{2}$  pound ravioli or tortellini; whisk a few tablespoons of the pasta water into the vegetable compote. Spoon over the pasta; garnish with toasted pine nuts and grated parmigiano reggiano.

**Grilled Vegetable Crostini:** Brush thin baguette slices with olive oil and toast or broil. Top each with a heaping teaspoon of the topping and garnish with a sprig of mint.

**Grilled Vegetable Dip:** Put the topping in a wide bowl and surround with toasted, salted pita wedges.

**Grilled Vegetable Pizza:** Spread  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup of the topping on an 8-inch round of shaped pizza dough. Sprinkle with grated Fontina and bake at  $450^{\circ}\text{F}$  for 12 to 14 minutes, or cook on an outdoor grill.





# A guide to cooking vegetables on a gas grill



## Zucchini & summer squash

**TO PREPARE:** Trim off both ends. To make lengthwise slices for roll-ups (see the recipe on p. 55), trim a little off two long sides of the zucchini and cut the remainder into lengthwise strips, each about 1/4 inch thick. To use zucchini and summer squash on platters or in salads, trim the ends and cut slices on a sharp diagonal into ovals between 1/4 and 3/8 inch thick. Brush both sides of the strips or slices with plenty of olive oil and season with kosher salt just before grilling.

**TO GRILL:** Heat a gas grill to high. Put the strips or slices on the grill at a 45-degree angle to the grates and grill, covered, until well browned and limp, 3 to 4 minutes per side. Check occasionally and move the slices around gently with tongs as necessary so that they brown evenly; don't undercook them. When done, remove them from the grill and drape them over a cooling rack (to keep them from steaming as they cool).

## Portabella mushrooms

**TO PREPARE:** Wipe off any dirt with a damp paper towel. Cut or snap off the stem at the base. With a spoon, scrape out the dark gills on the underside of the cap and discard. Brush both sides of the mushroom cap with plenty of olive oil and season with kosher salt just before grilling.

**TO GRILL:** Heat a gas grill to high. Put the mushrooms, stem side up, directly on the grate. Grill the mushrooms for as long as they need to get very well browned (a lot of liquid will pool up in the cap), 5 to 8 minutes. When the cap is brown, turn it over and press down to gently push out as much liquid as possible. Grill for another 4 or 5 minutes until they're much thinner and drier.



## Onions

**TO PREPARE:** Trim the ends, peel, and cut into 1/2-inch-thick slices. Thread the slices on thin metal skewers (poultry lacers work great) or soaked wooden skewers. Brush liberally with olive oil and season with kosher salt.

**TO GRILL:** Heat a gas grill to high. Put the onion skewers on the grates and cook until the slices are well browned on both sides (they will have dark marks on them), about 15 minutes total. Turn one of the grill burners down to low and move the skewered slices to that area. Stack them loosely and leave them there for 10 minutes to finish cooking through. Alternatively, remove them from the grill and wrap them in foil to finish softening.



## Corn

**TO PREPARE:** Shuck the corn, removing all the husk and silk. Lay each ear of corn on a 12-inch square of aluminum foil. Rub each ear with 1 teaspoon butter and season all over with kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper. Tuck a sprig or two of fresh thyme or any other herb next to the corn and wrap the corn tightly in the foil.

**TO GRILL:** Heat a gas grill to high. Put the foil-wrapped corn on the grate, cover, and cook, turning every 5 to 6 minutes, for 15 to 20 minutes. Remove from the grill and open the foil loosely. The corn should be blackened in places. If it isn't, rewrap it and return it to the grill for another 5 minutes. Let cool.

## Using charcoal

If you grill over charcoal, build a two-zone fire so that you have hot and medium-low areas. Grill your vegetables uncovered over the hot coals to sear both sides (cooking times will depend on the heat of your fire). Move them to the cooler area and cover as directed to finish cooking.



## Eggplant

**TO PREPARE:** Use a vegetable peeler to peel lengthwise strips of skin from the eggplant: it will look striped. Alternatively, use a fork to score the skin deeply. (Cooked eggplant skin can be tough; smaller eggplant can have more tender skin, so you can leave it all on if you prefer.) Trim the ends. Cut the eggplant crosswise into rounds about  $\frac{3}{8}$  inch thick. Brush both sides of the slices with plenty of olive oil and season well with kosher salt just before grilling.

**TO GRILL:** Heat a gas grill to high, put the eggplant slices on the grate, and cover the grill. Grill, checking occasionally with tongs, until the slices are well browned on both sides, 3 to 4 minutes per side. Move the slices from the heat and stack them to finish cooking (put them on an upper rack, set them over a turned-off burner, or wrap them in foil off the grill). Let sit 15 to 20 minutes. (Eggplant will often still be raw in the middle without this last step of letting the residual heat steam the flesh.)



## Bell peppers

**TO PREPARE:** Leave whole.

**TO GRILL:** Heat a gas grill to high. Put the peppers on the grate, cover, and cook until the skins are blackened on all sides, turning with tongs as needed, 3 to 4 minutes per side, or a total of 10 to 15 minutes. Wrap the peppers in foil or put them in a paper bag to cool completely. When cool, peel off the blackened skins and remove the stems and seeds, reserving the flesh and juices.



## Asparagus

**TO PREPARE:** Trim off tough ends. Brush liberally with olive oil and season with plenty of salt.

**TO GRILL:** Heat a gas grill to high. Put the spears on the grate at an angle and grill, rolling over once, until lightly marked and slightly shriveled, about 2 minutes total.

## Plum tomatoes

**TO PREPARE:** Cut each tomato in half and gently seed. If time allows, sprinkle the cut sides with salt and allow the tomatoes to drain on a rack, cut side down, for 30 minutes. Rub lightly with olive oil.

**TO GRILL:** Heat a gas grill to medium. Grill the tomato halves (cut side down) for 7 to 9 minutes and then carefully turn them over with a spatula and move them to the lowest heat. Cook (skin side down) until much of the moisture is gone, another 8 to 12 minutes. Again using a spatula, press them gently to flatten and to encourage the moisture to release. Let them cook as long as you can (the longer they cook, the better they taste); some will begin to fall apart, but the skin should help keep them together.

## The rules of the grill

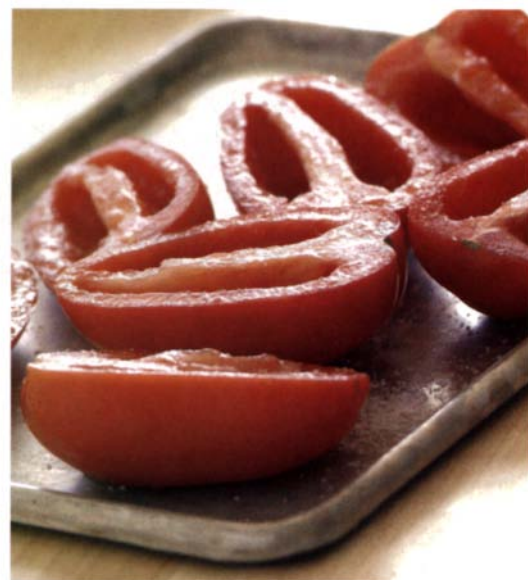
**1** Start grilling with all burners on high; if you need to move a vegetable to lower heat, just turn one burner down.

**2** Oil and salt your vegetables thoroughly. They'll cook more evenly. A little dripping oil might cause a quick flare-up on the grill; just lower the lid briefly to extinguish it.

**3** Learn your grill's personality. One grill's "high" is another's "medium." Learn where the hot and cool spots are and move the vegetables around to cook evenly. For nice grill marks, give them a quarter turn.

**4** Cook peppers, onions, and corn together. They don't need to be turned frequently so you can keep the lid down longer. Grill zucchini and eggplant together; they need to be checked more frequently—every minute or so.

**5** Don't undercook vegetables. The great flavor of grilled vegetables comes from their juices caramelizing at high heat.



Susie Middleton is Fine Cooking's executive editor. ♦



# Three Easy Sauces for Grilled Food



## ASIAN DIPPING SAUCE

Divide this sauce among several small bowls and have each diner dip thin slices of grilled beef, pork, chicken, shrimp, fish, or tofu into the sauce. Or brush it over grilled vegetables like onions or peppers to add an Asian twist.

Borrow a tradition from Southeast Asia, Argentina, or Spain, and whisk up these sauces for grilled fish, chicken, or steak

**T**his time of year, everyone's searching for quick ways to spice up that ordinary piece of grilled steak, fish, or chicken. Among my favorite solutions are dipping sauces: those relatively thin, explosively flavorful condiments found all along the world's barbecue trail. Their essence is spontaneity—there's no lengthy simmering or blending required. You simply whisk the ingredients together, so these sauces are ideal for quick week-night meals. And they're not just for grilled food—they're equally appealing on broiled or sautéed meat, poultry, or fish.

Most of these sauces balance richness with the piquancy of an acid: olive oil offset by vinegar, for example, or peanuts counterpointed by lime juice. Because they're so simple, dipping sauces rely on the assertive flavors of fresh herbs, fiery chiles, pungent garlic or onions, or tongue-tweaking citrus juice.

**Argentina's chimichurri is an outstanding example of the species**—a bright green sauce, rich with olive oil and redolent with garlic. There are probably as many versions as there are *asadores* (pit masters) to serve them. The most basic chimichurris, found among the *gauchos* (cowboys) of the Pampas, are little more than dried oregano and hot chile flakes moistened with oil and perhaps some vinegar. As you venture to the popular steak houses of Buenos Aires, the chimichurris become more vibrant and flavorful. Vampire-defying doses of garlic are added (my recipe is a little milder), with fistfuls of chopped fresh parsley (the latter is nature's mouthwash, muting the malodorous assault of the garlic). Vinegar offsets the richness of the oil. The overall effect is rather like that of a loose pesto without the cheese. I can't think of a steak, chop, or even

grilled chicken breast that wouldn't be immeasurably improved by a spoonful.

**Moving to Barcelona, we find the same yin-yang of oil and acid in a Catalan vinaigrette** that makes the French version of the sauce seem downright anemic. Spanish pit masters load up their vinaigrettes with capers, onions or shallots, diced tomatoes, and pickles—some go so far as to add diced olives or hard-cooked eggs. Catalan vinaigrette is one of three condiments invariably served with grilled seafood or meat in northeast Spain (the other two are alioli—garlic mayonnaise—and romesco—a roasted vegetable, chile, and nut sauce). If you've never thought of vinaigrettes as having much substance, this baby is for you.

**Southeast Asians are particularly adept at the art of the dipping sauce**, and Vietnamese bo bun or Thai satay wouldn't be

the same without them. These are true dipping sauces—served in tiny bowls, into which you dunk snippets of grilled beef or pork or tiny skewered satays. The dipping sauce I've included borrows freely from several cuisines of Southeast Asia: fish sauce from Thailand, sambal oelek (chile paste) from Indonesia, cilantro and mint from Vietnam. Although it contains peanuts, this dipping sauce is very different from the creamy peanut sauces of the region. Here, the nuts add sweetness and crunch.

### **Pair these sauces with just about any grilled food**

You could certainly follow tradition when serving these sauces—chimichurri with beef, Catalan vinaigrette with grilled poultry or seafood, Asian dipping sauce for grilled tofu or pork. But I prefer a mix-and-match approach. All are sufficiently robust to stand up to the sturdiest steak or sparerib, but none is so overpowering that it couldn't be served with grilled fish. The sauces can be used as a dip, in which case you'd want to provide each guest with a tiny bowlful, or you can just spoon them over a filet or any just-sliced grilled meat.

### **Chimichurri (Argentinean Garlic Herb Sauce)**

*Yields about 2 cups.*

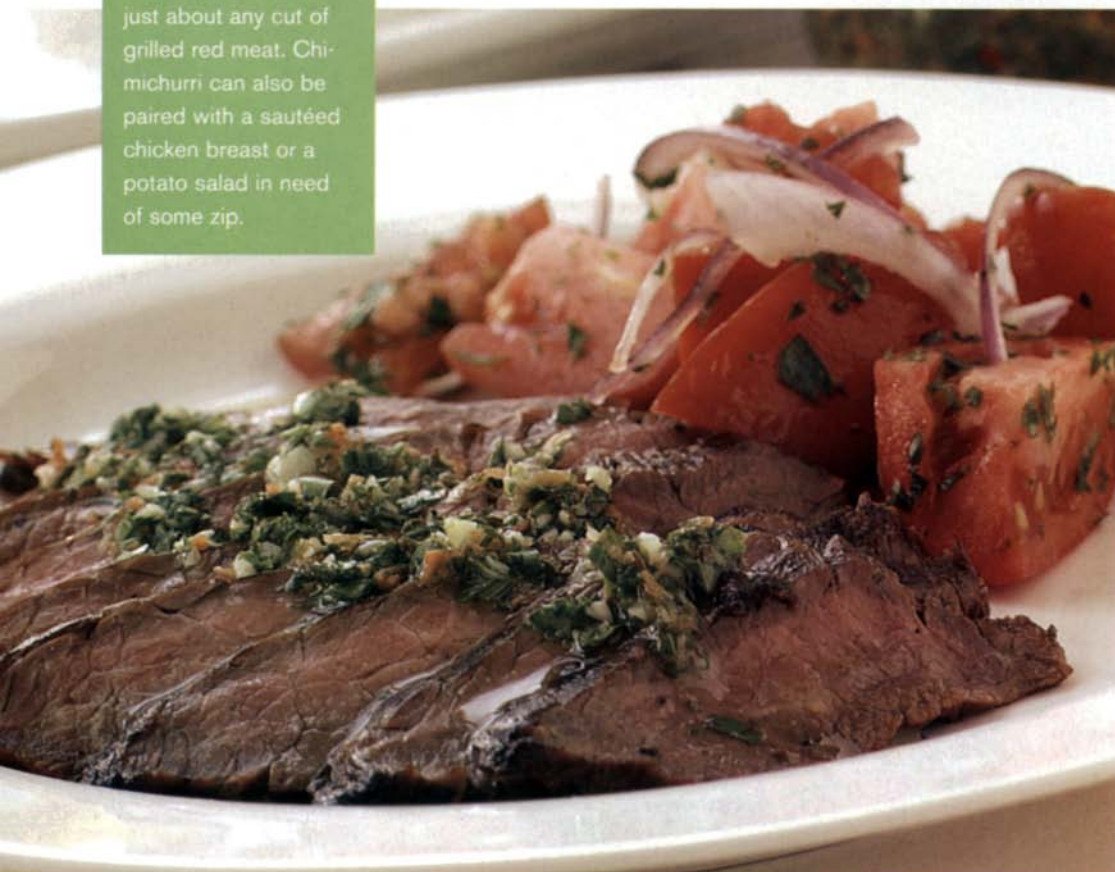
You can make this sauce several hours ahead, but try to serve it the same day. It will keep for several days, but the parsley will lose its bright green color.

- 4 cloves garlic
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt; more as needed
- 1 bunch flat-leaf parsley, stemmed, and chopped (about 1½ cups, lightly packed)
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 small carrot, finely grated
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper



#### **CHIMICHURRI**

In Argentina, chimichurri is served with *parrillada*—a mixed grill of steak, chops, and sausages. Follow the Argentines' lead and serve this herb sauce spooned over just about any cut of grilled red meat. Chimichurri can also be paired with a sautéed chicken breast or a potato salad in need of some zip.





½ teaspoon dried red chile flakes  
 ½ teaspoon grated lemon zest  
 5 tablespoons white-wine vinegar  
 or distilled white vinegar; more  
 to taste  
 5 tablespoons cold water; more  
 as needed  
 1 cup extra-virgin olive oil

Finely chop the garlic on a cutting board. Sprinkle the salt over it and repeatedly scrape the flat side of the knife over the garlic to mash it to a paste. Scrape the garlic paste into a medium bowl. Add the parsley, oregano, carrot, pepper, chile flakes, and lemon zest and mix. Add the vinegar and water and mix again. Whisk in the oil. Taste and correct the seasonings, adding salt, vinegar, water, or chile flakes: the sauce should be highly seasoned.

## Catalan Vinaigrette

*Yields about 2 cups.*

You can substitute small dill pickles for the cornichons, but the vinaigrette won't be quite as sharp. Sherry vinegar adds an aromatic sweetness, but wine vinegar works, too. For more body and richness, add some diced black olives.

1 clove garlic  
 1 teaspoon kosher salt; more  
 to taste  
 2 teaspoons Dijon mustard  
 ¼ cup sherry vinegar or red-wine  
 vinegar  
 3 to 4 tablespoons water  
 1 cup extra-virgin olive oil  
 ¼ sweet onion (such as Vidalia),  
 finely minced (about ¼ cup)  
 1 tablespoon capers, with juices  
 2 cornichon pickles, finely  
 chopped (about 2 tablespoons)  
 1 small ripe red tomato, cored,  
 peeled, seeded, and finely diced  
 (about ⅓ cup)  
 3 tablespoons chopped fresh  
 flat-leaf parsley  
 1 hard-cooked egg, peeled and  
 finely diced (optional)  
 Freshly ground black pepper

Finely chop the garlic on a cutting board. Sprinkle the salt over it and repeatedly scrape the flat side of the knife over the garlic to mash it to a paste. Scrape the garlic paste into a medium bowl. Add the mustard, vinegar, and water, and whisk until the salt is

dissolved. Gradually whisk in the oil in a thin stream: the sauce should thicken slightly.

Whisk in the onion, capers, pickles, tomato, parsley, and egg (if using). Taste and correct the seasonings, adding salt and pepper to taste. Serve within a few hours of making and whisk well before serving.

## Asian Dipping Sauce

*Yields about 2 cups.*

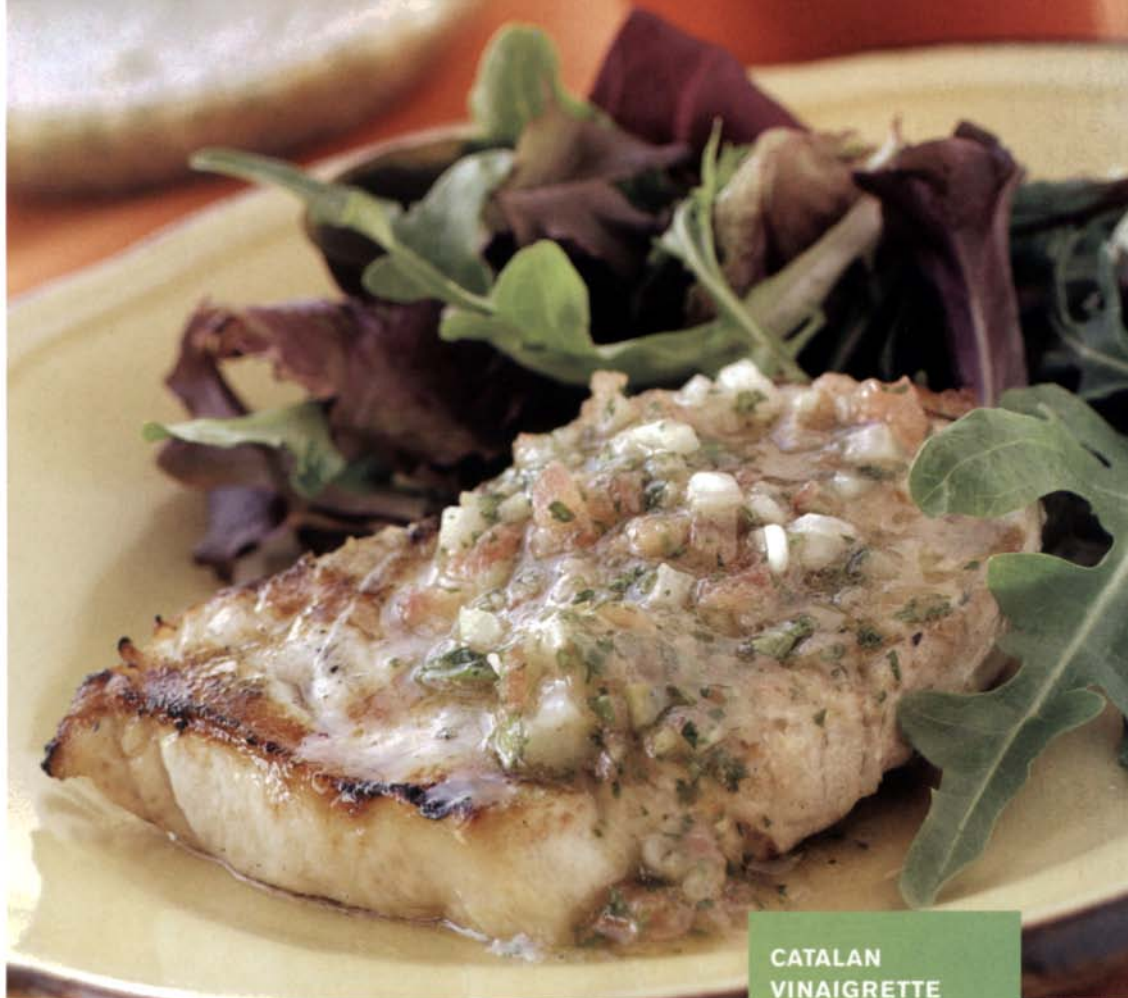
Fish sauce, a pungent condiment, is used in Southeast Asian cuisines much like soy sauce is in Chinese cooking. Look for it in the Asian section of your supermarket, as well as in specialty markets.

2 cloves garlic  
 ¼ cup granulated sugar; more  
 to taste  
 ⅓ cup soy sauce  
 ⅓ cup Asian fish sauce  
 ⅓ cup fresh lime juice  
 1 to 2 fresh serrano or jalapeño  
 chiles, thinly sliced crosswise

2 tablespoons chopped scallion  
 greens  
 2 tablespoons chopped fresh  
 cilantro leaves  
 2 tablespoons chopped fresh  
 mint  
 ¼ cup finely chopped unsalted  
 dry-roasted peanuts  
 ½ to ¾ cup water; more to taste

Finely chop the garlic on a cutting board. Sprinkle 1 tablespoon of the sugar over the garlic and repeatedly scrape the flat side of the knife over the garlic to mash it to a paste. Scrape the paste into a medium bowl. Add the remaining 3 tablespoons sugar, the soy sauce, fish sauce, and lime juice and whisk until the sugar is dissolved. Stir in the chiles, scallions, cilantro, mint, and peanuts. Stir in enough water to obtain a mellow but zesty sauce.

Steven Raichlen wrote *The Barbecue Bible and How to Grill*. ♦



### CATALAN VINAIGRETTE

This vinaigrette has enough substance and flavor to stand up to grilled poultry or beef, but it especially complements seafood. Spoon a generous portion over a grilled halibut or swordfish steak. If you have any left over, toss it with boiled potatoes for a quick potato salad.



# Two Fresh Takes on Shrimp, Peas & Mint

How do you get creative with what's at the market? We asked two chefs to improvise dinner and to share the secrets of their inspiration

COMPILED BY AMY ALBERT



**H**ave you ever been curious about what goes on inside the head of a great chef—how he or she puts together those perfectly balanced, boldly flavored signature dishes? One way to find out, we decided, was to get in on the creative process first hand. So we asked two chefs to make a dinner from a “market basket” of seasonal ingredients. And as part of the deal, they agreed to share their thoughts

with us: what inspired them about the ingredients; how they decided to cook and season them; what other flavors would pair well. Watching two chefs create different dishes from the same ingredients can boost your own improvisational skills.

We called on Gary Danko from Restaurant Gary Danko in San Francisco and Greg Higgins from Higgins in Portland, Oregon. We gave them both the same market basket

and asked them each to follow the rules for wildcards and substitutions below.

## Rules of the game

Gary and Greg started with the same five market ingredients, which they could use in any amount. They were allowed to drop one of those ingredients, to use unlimited ingredients from a basic cook's pantry, and to choose up to three special “wildcard” ingredients.

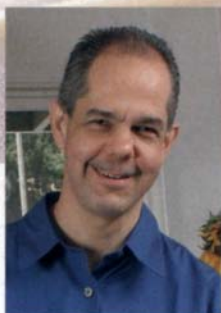
**Market ingredients:** Shrimp, sugar snap peas, fresh ginger, garlic, and fresh mint.

## Basic cook's pantry:

Butter, vegetable oil, olive oil, lemon, cream, milk, eggs, broth (beef, chicken, or vegetable), onions, flour, vinegar, water, white wine, salt, and pepper.

**Wildcard ingredients:** Any meat, vegetable, seafood, condiment, flavoring, fruit, herb, nut, spice, or starch in any amount.





## Gary Danko sizzles a stir-fry

This group of ingredients was immediately inspiring to me. Although I had the option of omitting one of them, I didn't want to, because they all taste so great together.

Stir-frying is the technique that came to mind as just the right thing for shrimp, sugar snaps, ginger, and garlic. Stir-frying cooks ingredients quickly and helps them maintain their freshness. Quick cooking also means that dinner won't take forever, which is important, too.

For my wildcards, I chose fennel, fennel seed, and lime.

Fennel seemed like a natural addition to the flavors of this springtime stir-fry. Because I'm adding the fennel fresh here (rather than blanching it first), I'm getting all that wonderful, delicate anise-like flavor. A great way to reinforce the flavor notes of fennel bulb is with fennel seed, so I used it ground up to flavor the cooking oil. Finally, acid is what gives backbone to any dish; in this case, lime really makes all the flavors sing. You could use lemon, but I find both the fragrance and flavor of lime more intriguing, and it works beautifully with the mint to pick up all the flavors. I like to serve this stir-fry over polenta, which isn't traditional, but it's delicious. Jasmine or basmati rice would also be good.

### Stir-Fried Shrimp, Sugar Snaps & Fennel

Serves six.

Add the salt gradually as you cook the stir-fry. Use a Micro-plane grater for the ginger and garlic if you have one. Because the garlic and ginger are grated so fine, I put them in later than usual for a stir-fry and cook them just long enough to get rid of the raw flavor.

**FOR THE FENNEL OIL:**  
2½ tablespoons fennel seed, finely ground  
A few drops water  
¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil

**FOR THE STIR-FRY:**  
½ pound sugar snap peas, trimmed (see p. 72)  
1 teaspoon kosher salt; more to taste  
1 cup thinly sliced fennel (about ⅛ inch)

2 pounds jumbo shrimp (16 to 20 per pound), shelled and deveined  
1 teaspoon grated garlic  
1 teaspoon grated fresh ginger  
2 tablespoons very thinly sliced fresh mint  
1 lime, sliced into wedges

**At least a day ahead, make the oil:** Moisten the ground fennel seed with just enough water so that it adheres to itself slightly when squeezed. In a plastic container with a tight-fitting lid, stir together the moistened ground fennel and olive oil. Seal and refrigerate overnight or up to a week. Before using, warm the oil to room temperature and strain through cheesecloth.

**Make the stir-fry:** In a large sauté pan or stir-fry pan, heat 3 tablespoons of the fennel oil over medium-high heat (the oil is hot enough when you put a sugar snap in the pan and it starts to sizzle). Add the sugar snaps, season with some of the salt, and stir-fry until the peas have a bit of a golden color and are crunchy and blistered, about 2 minutes (they'll be crisp-tender). Add the fennel, season with a bit more salt, and stir-fry until the fennel is al dente, about 60 seconds. Increase the heat to high, add the shrimp, toss well, and make a space in the center of the pan. Into this space, pour the remaining fennel oil and then add the garlic and ginger, stirring for about 15 seconds. Season with a bit more salt and continue to stir-fry until shrimp are no longer glossy and start to look pink and opaque. Taste and add more salt if you like, scatter the mint on top, and serve with the lime wedges on the side.

*Gary Danko is the chef-owner of Restaurant Gary Danko in San Francisco.*

(Continued)



## Greg Higgins stirs up a risotto

The combination of shrimp, sugar snap peas, and garlic invited me to create a take on risotto that's reminiscent of what Venetians make to celebrate the appearance of peas in the spring...

...so I decided to drop the ginger, and I chose three wildcards: arborio rice, leeks, and chile paste. Making a delicate stock from the shrimp shells flavors the rice, and adding a whole leek to the stock makes it even more savory and builds a flavor bridge with the other green elements in the dish: the peas and mint. (Adding the pea strings and any scraps to the stock is also a good idea.) My third

wildcard, chile paste, is an ingredient I love to use in small amounts: not enough to give spicy heat, but just enough to enhance flavors. I like sambal oelek, a type sold in Asian groceries. Taste of Thai, a super-market brand, is fine, too. If you can't find either, use a pinch of red chile flakes instead.

Shrimp cooks too quickly to add much flavor to the risotto as it cooks. So I sauté and flavor the shrimp separately and use it to top the risotto. This way, you avoid overcooking the shrimp, the flavors are cleaner, and you've got a great-looking topping for your dish.

You might expect cheese in risotto as a finishing touch, but I've omitted it. Cheese would overwhelm these fresh, delicate flavors, and there's enough richness so that you don't need it.

### Risotto of Shrimp & Sugar Snaps

*Serves four as a main course.*

I like to leave the shrimp tails on, but you can take them off and use them in the stock, if you like.

#### Salt

**¾ pound sugar snap peas,** trimmed (see p. 72); trimmings reserved

**1½ pounds large shrimp** (31 to 40 per pound), shelled and deveined; shells reserved

**1 medium leek** (white and green parts), coarsely chopped and thoroughly rinsed

**1 large onion,** chopped and divided in half

**1½ cups dry white wine** (such as Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Grigio, or Pinot Gris)

**4 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil,** divided in half

**1½ cups arborio rice**

**Grated zest and juice of 1 lemon,** both divided in half

**2 teaspoons chile paste,** divided in half, or a pinch dried red chile flakes

**2 cloves garlic,** minced

**Freshly ground black pepper**

**2 tablespoons very finely sliced fresh mint**

Bring a pot of well-salted water to a boil and add the peas. Boil just until they change color, 20 to 30 seconds. Drain and refresh with cold water. Set aside.

#### Make the shrimp stock:

In a large saucepan, combine the shrimp shells with the sugar snap trimmings, chopped leek, half of the chopped onion, and 1 cup of the wine. Add 2 quarts water, bring to a boil, and simmer uncovered for 30 minutes. Strain, pressing on the solids, and return the liquid to the pan, keeping the heat low. You should have about 6½ cups of stock.

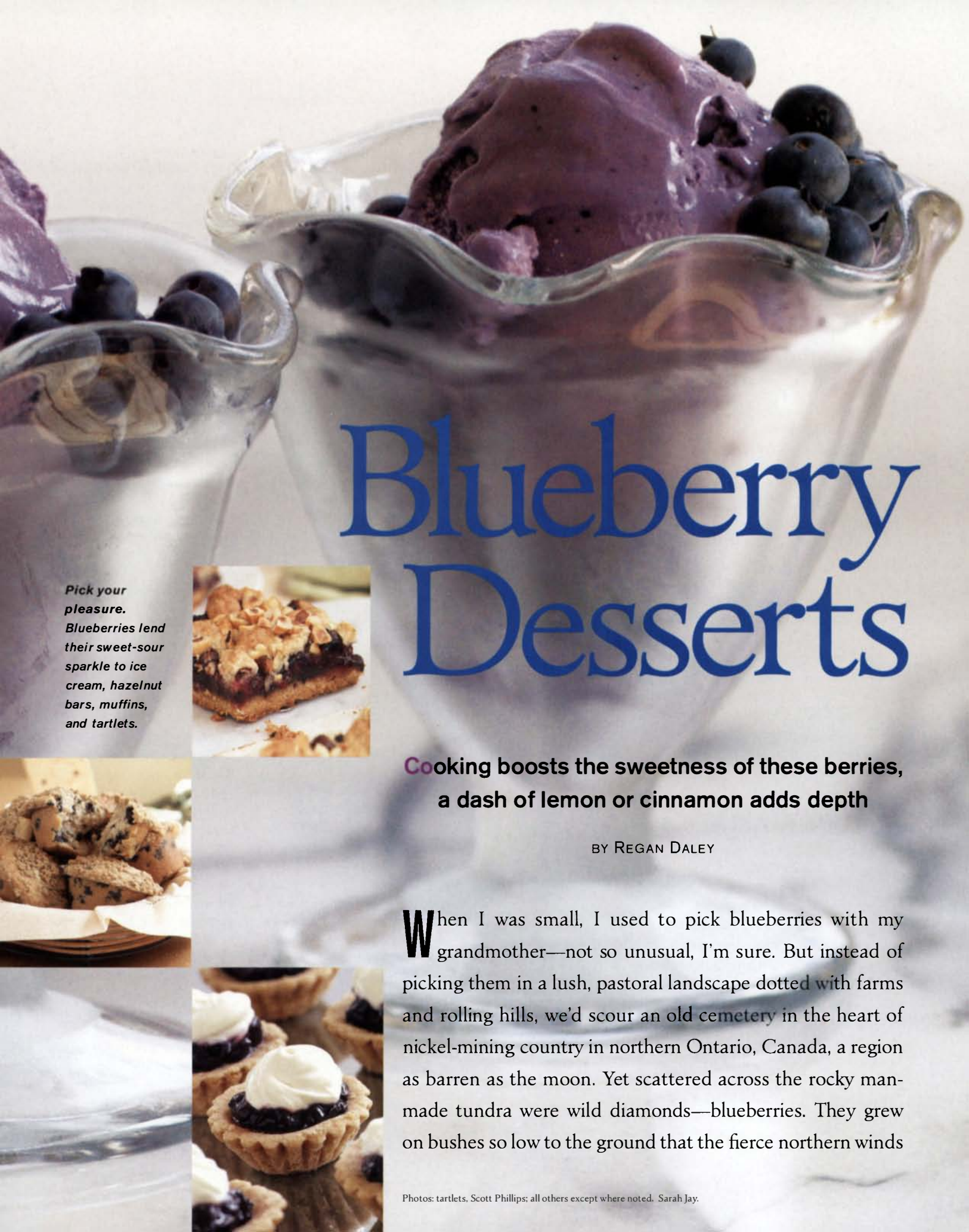
#### Make the risotto:

In a large, heavy saucepan or Dutch oven, heat half of the olive oil over medium high. Add the rice, the remaining onion, half of the lemon zest, half of the chile paste, all the garlic, and 1 teaspoon salt. Cook, stirring, until the rice grains are thoroughly coated and very lightly toasted, 3 to 5 minutes. Add the remaining ½ cup wine. When the wine has evaporated, add 1½ cups of the shrimp stock, stirring frequently and keeping the liquid at a simmer. When the stock is absorbed, add another 1½ cups, stirring frequently. Continue stirring and adding stock in this manner until the rice is al dente, about 20 minutes (stir in the blanched sugar snaps at 15 minutes). When the risotto is done, set it aside.

Set a sauté pan over medium-high heat; add the remaining 2 tablespoons oil. When the pan is hot, add the remaining chile paste. Sauté about 1 minute. Add the shrimp, season with salt and pepper, and sauté just until the shrimp turn pink, 2 to 3 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat and stir in half of the lemon juice. Loosen the risotto with some stock if needed and fold in half of the mint and the remaining lemon zest and juice. Adjust the seasonings, adding more lemon juice if you like. Divide the risotto among four plates, top with the shrimp and with the remaining mint. Serve immediately.

*Greg Higgins is the chef-owner of Higgins in Portland, Oregon. ♦*





# Blueberry Desserts

*Pick your pleasure. Blueberries lend their sweet-sour sparkle to ice cream, hazelnut bars, muffins, and tartlets.*



**Cooking boosts the sweetness of these berries, a dash of lemon or cinnamon adds depth**

BY REGAN DALEY

**W**hen I was small, I used to pick blueberries with my grandmother—not so unusual, I’m sure. But instead of picking them in a lush, pastoral landscape dotted with farms and rolling hills, we’d scour an old cemetery in the heart of nickel-mining country in northern Ontario, Canada, a region as barren as the moon. Yet scattered across the rocky man-made tundra were wild diamonds—blueberries. They grew on bushes so low to the ground that the fierce northern winds

howled right past, and so tough and sturdy that you might have thought their stubborn roots plunged to the center of the earth. But the berries were as tiny as sugar peas and as sweet as jam. A handful, still warm from the sun, was bliss; a whole pie was unspeakable.

Nowadays, I can't often get my hands on wild blueberries, but fortunately, cultivated blueberries are always around. There's a marked difference in flavor, texture, and intensity, however, between summer berries and those from any other time. So my first rule for making blueberry desserts is to stay faithful to the seasons. Wait until summer to buy them, and try to buy from a local producer.

**Look for plump, unwrinkled blueberries with no signs of mold, decay, or crushing.** They should be evenly dark bluish purple with little or no green or white. Store the berries loosely covered at room temperature for up to a day. For any longer than that, they keep best in the refrigerator; line a shallow container with paper towels, put the berries in a single layer, and cover with more paper towels. Wash blueberries only at the last minute and blot them dry with paper towels.

### A happy marriage with nuts, fruit, and cream

What I love about blueberries is their complex sweetness and faint sour tickle. Besides lemon, their flavor is a nice match for other fruits like oranges, bananas, limes, and apricots, and they marry beautifully with most other berries, especially raspberries, strawberries, and members of the blackberry family. Hazelnuts, almonds, and pecans are perfect partners, with the richness of the nuts balancing the tang of the fruit. I find that white chocolate is a better match for blueberries than dark chocolate, and I often combine the two in tarts. Cream cheese, custard, whipped cream, and just about any other dessert-friendly dairy product are excellent foils for the fruit. Finally, blueberries' faint sourness makes them especially good when



*Ice cream that tastes like blueberry pie. Storing this ice cream in the freezer mutes its vibrant flavor, so serve when it's freshly made and still a bit soft, if possible.*

A squeeze of lemon or a pinch of cinnamon enhances the berries' own fruity flavor.

## Blueberry Ice Cream

*Yields about 5 cups.*

### FOR THE BLUEBERRY SYRUP:

10 ounces (2 cups) fresh blueberries  
 ¼ cup light corn syrup  
 ½ teaspoon fresh lemon juice  
 ⅛ teaspoon ground cinnamon  
 1 large egg white

### FOR THE ICE CREAM CUSTARD:

2 cups half-and-half  
 5 large egg yolks  
 ½ cup granulated sugar  
 ¾ cup whipping cream  
 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

**Make the syrup:** In a 2-quart heavy-based saucepan, combine the berries, corn syrup, lemon juice, and cinnamon. Set the pan over low heat and mash the berries roughly with a potato masher or the back of a large fork. Increase the heat to medium low and bring the mixture to a simmer. Simmer for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally, and then let cool for 5 to 10 minutes.

Put the berries in a fine sieve set over a bowl. Press on the berries to extract all the liquid; discard the solids. You'll have about 1 cup liquid.

In a separate bowl, beat the egg white just enough to loosen and break it up, but try to incorporate as little air as possible. Stir the beaten white into the blueberry syrup just until well combined, cover with plastic wrap, and refrigerate until thoroughly chilled. You can make the syrup up to three days ahead of making the ice cream.

**Make the custard:** In a 1- to 2-quart heavy-based saucepan, heat the half-and-half over medium heat. Bring just to a boil, watching so it doesn't boil over, and then remove it from the heat.

Meanwhile, in a medium bowl, lightly beat the yolks to

break them up. Whisk in the sugar just until incorporated. Don't overwhisk; you don't want a very thick, pale mixture. Set the bowl on a damp towel to hold it steady and very slowly pour the hot half-and-half over the egg mixture, whisking constantly so the yolks don't curdle. Rinse the saucepan but don't dry the inside; a film of water helps prevent the custard from sticking to the pot. Have ready a fine sieve set over a bowl. Return the custard to the saucepan and set it over medium-low heat. Stirring constantly with a wooden spoon, cook the custard until it thickens enough to coat the back of the spoon, 7 to 10 minutes; a finger drawn across the back of the spoon should leave a clean trail. Immediately pour the custard through the sieve. Stir in the cream and the vanilla extract and press a piece of plastic onto the surface of the warm custard to keep a skin from forming. Poke a few slits in the plastic with the tip of a paring knife to let the steam escape. Let cool slightly and then refrigerate until well chilled, at least 4 hours but ideally 8 hours or overnight.

### Make the ice cream:

Stir the blueberry syrup into the chilled custard; mix thoroughly. Pour the mixture into an ice-cream maker and freeze following the manufacturer's instructions. For the most intense flavor, serve right away. Otherwise, store in an airtight container for up to a week; let the ice cream soften in the refrigerator for 10 minutes before serving to coax out more flavor.



## Blueberry Muffins with Cinnamon Crumble

*Yields 12 regular-size or  
6 large muffins.*

### FOR THE CINNAMON CRUMBLE:

½ cup all-purpose flour  
¼ cup packed brown sugar  
Scant ½ teaspoon ground  
cinnamon  
2 ounces (¼ cup) cold unsalted  
butter, cut into small pieces

### FOR THE MUFFINS:

Butter and flour for the muffin  
tins, or paper muffin liners  
6¾ ounces (1½ cups) all-  
purpose flour  
2 ounces (½ cup) cake flour  
1 teaspoon baking soda  
½ teaspoon baking powder  
½ teaspoon salt  
¾ teaspoon ground cinnamon  
½ teaspoon grated or ground  
nutmeg  
4 ounces (½ cup) unsalted butter,  
at room temperature  
1 cup granulated sugar  
2 large eggs  
1½ teaspoons pure vanilla  
extract  
1 cup buttermilk  
1 cup fresh blueberries, picked  
over, or frozen blueberries

Set an oven rack to the middle of  
the oven. Heat the oven to 350°F.

**Make the crumble:** In a  
medium bowl, combine the flour,  
brown sugar, and cinnamon.  
Add the butter and work it in  
with your fingertips until you  
have a uniform, moist crumble.  
Cover with plastic wrap.

**Make the muffins:** Butter  
and flour 12 regular (½-cup) or

6 large (1-cup) muffin tins or line  
them with paper liners. In a small  
bowl, sift together both flours,  
the baking soda, baking powder,  
salt, cinnamon, and nutmeg. Us-  
ing a hand mixer or stand mixer  
fitted with the paddle, cream the  
butter and sugar in a large bowl  
until light and fluffy, about 3 min-  
utes. Add the eggs, one at a  
time, beating well after each ad-  
dition. Scrape the sides of the  
bowl and beat in the vanilla. On  
low speed, add the flour mixture  
in three additions, alternating  
with the buttermilk in two addi-  
tions, beginning and ending with  
the flour. Gently fold in the  
berries by hand. Spoon the  
batter into the muffin cups to  
almost full.

Scatter a generous amount  
of the crumble over the batter in  
each muffin cup (there may be  
some leftover).

Bake until the tops are  
golden and spring back when  
touched lightly and a wooden  
skewer inserted in the center  
comes out clean, 20 to 25 min-  
utes for regular muffins, 30 to  
35 minutes for large. Cool in the  
pan for 5 minutes and then turn  
out onto a rack. Serve warm  
(slathered with butter if you like)  
or at room temperature.

*A muffin that's more  
like dessert or an  
afternoon snack.  
Thanks to the cream-  
ing method of mixing,  
these blueberry  
muffins are more  
cakey than muffiny.  
Cake flour makes  
them extra tender,  
but if you don't have  
it, you can use all  
all-purpose flour.*



## Tips for baking with frozen blueberries

Fresh blueberries freeze brilliantly, and indi-  
vidually quick frozen (IQF) berries of both  
wild and cultivated varieties are widely avail-  
able. IQF means the berries have been  
frozen individually rather than as a large  
clump, which makes them perfect for baking.

To freeze your own "IQF" berries, scatter  
clean, dry berries in a single layer on a  
baking sheet. Freeze on the sheet until the  
fruit is solid and then transfer the berries  
quickly to freezerproof bags or containers.  
Use within four to six months.

For most recipes, you shouldn't thaw the  
berries before using them. The thin skins  
tend to all but disintegrate, leaving a purple,  
juicy mess where lovely berries once sat.

Mix them into batters gently and quickly,  
using as few strokes as possible to avoid  
crushing the fruit and turning the batter  
a glaring lavender.

For blueberry pancakes, cook the pancake  
on one side and sprinkle on the frozen  
berries just before flipping.

In some batters, frozen blueberries can  
streak the batter an alarming shade of green.  
This occurs in alkaline conditions, such as  
batters with baking powder and no acidic  
ingredients like buttermilk, yogurt, or lemon  
juice. To minimize this risk, be sure the  
berries are solidly frozen and mix them  
in swiftly and gently.







*A rich, nutty pastry sandwiches a sweet blueberry filling. These bars keep for a day or two, tightly covered at room temperature. For a special dessert, warm them and top them with vanilla ice cream.*

laced with interesting sweeteners, like maple syrup, honey, and brown sugar or raw sugar.

**Blueberries have two curious flavor allies: cinnamon and lemon.** I sometimes add a generous measure of either one of these flavorings to blueberry desserts, giving me a lemon-blueberry pie filling or a blueberry-cinnamon bar. But you don't even need to go that far. Just a tiny amount—a squeeze of lemon or a pinch of cinnamon—enhances the berries' own fruity flavor, much the same way vanilla extract complements chocolate. Such a small amount of cinnamon or lemon won't be detectable in the finished dessert, but it will add perceptible depth and complexity. Even in recipes that don't call for either, I almost always add one or the other, often both, and am delighted with the results.

You might wonder why the recipes here for ice cream, bars, and sauce all involve cooking the berries. What you lose in freshness and visual appeal (the berries go from indigo blue to indigo black), you make up for in flavor. As the blueberries cook, whether they're on the stovetop or in the oven, some of their water evaporates, thereby concentrating the fruit's sweetness and flavor.

## Blueberry-Hazelnut Bars

*Yields 12 large or 48 bite-size bars.*

### FOR THE CRUST AND TOPPING:

Butter or vegetable oil for greasing the pan  
5 ounces (1 cup) hazelnuts, toasted and skinned  
9 ounces (2 cups) all-purpose flour  
4 ounces (1 cup) confectioners' sugar  
2 teaspoons baking powder  
8 ounces (1 cup) cold unsalted butter, cut into large cubes  
1 large egg  
1 large egg yolk  
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

### FOR THE FILLING:

2 pounds (6 cups) fresh blueberries, picked over  
 $\frac{2}{3}$  cup granulated sugar  
 $\frac{1}{3}$  cup cornstarch  
2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon ground cinnamon  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon salt

### Make the crust and topping:

Lightly grease a 9x13-inch baking pan. Line the bottom and sides with a sheet of parchment, leaving a few inches of paper hanging over the edges of the two long sides to help remove the finished bars.

Roughly chop  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of the hazelnuts; halved or quartered is about right. Set aside. Put the remaining  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup hazelnuts in a food processor and process until finely ground; put them in a large bowl. Add the flour, confectioners' sugar, and baking powder and stir with a fork to blend. With a pastry blender or two knives, cut in the butter until the largest lumps are the size of fat peas. Lightly beat the egg and yolk and add all but 2 tablespoons of the egg to the butter-flour mixture. Add the vanilla and gently toss with your fingertips until the mixture clumps together. It should be uniformly blended, moist, and crumbly. If the dough looks dry and floury, mix in a little more beaten egg. Or you can mix the dough in a large (11-cup capacity) food processor. Pulse in short bursts to avoid overworking the dough.

Heat the oven to 350°F.

Divide the dough into two portions, one slightly larger than the other. Using floured fingertips, pat the larger portion into the bottom of the prepared pan, pressing firmly, and refrigerate for 15 to 20 minutes. Cover the remaining portion with plastic wrap and refrigerate as well.

Remove the pan from the fridge and prick the crust all over with a fork. Bake until the edges are golden and the pastry is dry and light brown, 20 to 25 minutes. Let cool completely on a wire rack before filling (otherwise, the bars will get soggy).

**Make the filling:** In a large bowl, combine the berries, sugar, cornstarch, lemon juice, cinnamon, and salt. Toss gently to thoroughly coat the berries and then scatter the filling onto the cooled crust, scraping the bowl well. Spread the berries in an even layer.



Crumble the reserved dough over the berries (see the photo above); it won't cover everything. Bake for 25 minutes and then sprinkle on the reserved chopped hazelnuts. Continue baking until the topping is puffed and golden and the filling is bubbling not only near the edges but also close to the center of the pan, another 50 to 60 minutes. Put the pan on a wire rack and let cool completely. Use the parchment to lift the whole batch out and then cut into bars. A long serrated knife works well; jiggle it a little through the top layer and then gently push down to cut through the bottom crust.



# Quick desserts from blueberry sauce

## A SWEET AND SIMPLE

**BLUEBERRY FOOL:** For eight servings, whip 1½ cups heavy cream to firm peaks, sweetening it with a few teaspoons sugar, if you like. Gently fold in about 1 cup chilled blueberry sauce just until incorporated. Chill and serve within 4 hours.



## BLUEBERRY SAUCE TARTLETS WITH CREME

**FRAICHE:** For the tartlets above, line 1½- to 2-inch tartlet tins with a sweet pastry crust. Blind-bake the shells until golden and let them cool completely. Fill each shell with a spoonful of chilled blueberry sauce and top with crème fraîche or sweetened whipped cream.



## AN UNTRADITIONAL

**TRIFLE:** Use the sauce in place of both fresh fruit and jam in the trifle above. Douse ladyfingers (or pieces of sponge or pound cake) with sherry. In a glass bowl or individual dishes, layer the ladyfingers with the chilled sauce and some sweetened whipped cream; garnish with fresh blueberries, if you like.

## BLUEBERRY-FILLED

**SPONGE CAKE:** Halve a plain sponge cake horizontally. Whip 1 cup heavy cream with a little sugar and vanilla extract to firm peaks. Spread the bottom cake layer with blueberry sauce; top with the second layer. Frost the top with the whipped cream. Garnish with fresh blueberries that have been dusted with sugar.



This sauce is wonderful over waffles, pancakes, French toast, pound cake, and ice cream, and it's also a versatile component in these four dessert ideas.

## Rustic Blueberry Sauce with Cassis

*Yields about 2 cups.*

While brown sugar works fine in this recipe, raw Demerara sugar is worth seeking out for its deep, toffee-like flavor (for sources, see p. 80). This sauce keeps for a week in the refrigerator.

**3 cups fresh blueberries**  
**⅓ cup raw sugar, such as Demerara or Barbados, or packed brown sugar**  
**2 tablespoons crème de cassis (black currant liqueur)**  
**2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice**  
**Scant ⅛ teaspoon ground cinnamon**

Combine all the ingredients in a 2-quart heavy-based saucepan. Stir over medium-low heat until the sugar dissolves and the berries release their juice. Bring to a simmer and cook until most of the berries have burst and the mixture has the consistency of a runny sauce (it thickens somewhat as it cools), 7 or 8 minutes. Transfer to a clean container, press a piece of plastic wrap onto the surface, and poke a few holes in the plastic to let steam escape. Let cool to lukewarm and then refrigerate. Serve cool, warm, or at room temperature.

Regan Daley wrote *In the Sweet Kitchen*, which won the IACP Cookbook of the Year award last year. ♦

Welcome to the first From Our Test Kitchen column. We're excited to now have a place to share the extra tips on techniques, ingredients, and gadgets we discover while we're developing and testing the recipes for *Fine Cooking*. In every issue, this will be the place to go to pick up a new kitchen skill, learn about an exotic ingredient, or see the results of blind taste tests of ingredients you use most. Be sure to let us know what topics you'd like us to cover in future issues.

—the Editors

#### knife skills

### Chiffonade: fine shreds of leafy herbs or lettuces

A basil or mint chiffonade (which means “made of rags” in French) is a beautiful and flavorful accent for dishes like pastas and fruit salads. Here's how to cut a chiffonade.



Stack about ten leaves into a neat pile. With practice, you may find that you can handle more than ten at a time.



Roll the pile of leaves lengthwise into a fairly tight cigar shape.



Use your sharpest knife to slice across the cigar. The closer together the slices, the finer your chiffonade will be.



Fluff the chiffonade with your fingertips to separate the shreds. The cut edges will darken quickly, so use the chiffonade as soon as possible.

### Kosher vs. coarse salt

If you have really sharp eyes, you may have noticed that in this issue we've changed our habit of calling for “coarse salt” in our recipes to calling for kosher salt. The reason for all the fuss is to encourage you to use a kosher-style salt because it's easy to pinch and sprinkle, it sticks to foods better, and it dissolves more quickly. The exception comes with baking recipes, where we'd suggest table salt or a fine sea salt, both of which will disperse better than kosher in dry ingredients. In the past, when we called for coarse salt, what we meant was kosher salt or a similar grind of sea salt. But we realized that we had opened the door to error because some “coarse” sea salts are really more like rock salt.

—Jennifer Armentrout,  
test kitchen manager





at the market

## Which eggplant is which?

*While testing the recipes for the grilled vegetable story in this issue, we discovered that there's a bit of confusion out there regarding the types of eggplant found in most produce aisles. So, to set the record straight:*

**American or standard globe eggplant** are the biggest, most common, and generally least expensive of all eggplant. They're teardrop-shaped and range in length from 6 to more than 10 inches. They tend to be less flavorful than other types, but they're useful for their high flesh-to-skin ratio, which makes for quick chopping into chunks for ratatouille, stews, and dips. Their wider diameter is also a plus when slicing into large cutlets.

**Italian eggplant** are similar in shape and color to American eggplant, but diminutive in size—only a few inches in diameter and 5 to 8 inches long. Italian eggplant are more delicate and sweeter than their larger cousins, and their smaller size makes them a good choice for stuffing, roasting, and broiling.

**Chinese eggplant** are easily identified by their pale violet skin and slender, cylindrical shape. They have the most delicate flavor of all the market varieties. Their even contours make them ideal for slicing, and because they cook quickly, they're good in stir-fries and sautés.

**Japanese eggplant** are slightly smaller than Chinese eggplant and have the same dark purple skin as the American and Italian varieties. Also quick cooking but not as mild as Chinese eggplant, they're excellent for grilling and broiling, and they stand up to the assertive flavors of garlic, soy, and ginger.

—Molly Stevens, contributing editor

### For extra-tender tenderloin, trim the silverskin



Pork, beef, and lamb tenderloins all have an area of connective tissue known as silverskin for its silvery-white appearance. Silverskin doesn't dissolve when the tenderloin is cooked, so it needs to be trimmed away.

Position the tip of a boning knife about  $\frac{1}{2}$  to 1 inch from one end of the visible silverskin. Push the tip under a strip of silverskin about  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch wide. Angle the knife

slightly up toward the silverskin as you slide the knife down the tenderloin, freeing the silverskin. Use your free hand to hold the silverskin taut as you cut. If your knife isn't extremely sharp, you may need to use a slight sawing motion to work down the tenderloin. Once you've cut all the way through the end of the strip, turn the knife around and cut off the end that's still attached. Repeat until all the silverskin is gone. —J. A.

## Is that a jelly, a jam, a preserve, or a marmalade?

Many people toss around these terms rather loosely—too loosely, some preserving purists might say. Here's how to distinguish the various types.



**Jellies** are clear fruit juices that have been gelled into a shimmering, translucent solid that holds its shape but is still spreadable.

**Jams** are made from crushed or chopped fruit (some people use puréed fruit) and are often less firm than jellies.

**Preserves** contain whole fruit or large pieces of fruit suspended in a firm jelly or a less gelled fruit syrup.

**Marmalades** are jellies that contain pieces of citrus fruit suspended evenly throughout.

## Cool down with a smoothie

For the blender review on pp. 20-22, we kept the emphasis of our testing on its most popular use—making frozen drinks. We passed on daiquiris and margaritas; after all, we were at work. But we made up for it with lots of strawberry-banana smoothies and orange slushes (our version of the mall food-court icon Orange Julius). Reviewing ten blenders gave us plenty of experience to fine-tune both recipes.

### Classic Strawberry-Banana Smoothie

*Yields about 3½ cups.*

**¾ cup orange juice**  
**⅓ cup low-fat vanilla yogurt**  
**1 banana, peeled**  
**2 heaping cups (12 ounces)**  
**individually quick-frozen**  
**strawberries**

Put the orange juice, yogurt, banana, and 1 cup of the berries in a blender. Blend using the pulse option (or start at a low speed and gradually increase to high). Once blended, add the remaining berries one at a time through the jar cap's fill hole while the machine is running. Blend until smooth.

### Orange Slush

*Yields about 3¼ cups.*

**1 cup milk**  
**3 tablespoons granulated sugar**  
**½ teaspoon pure vanilla extract**  
**1 can (6 ounces) frozen orange**  
**juice concentrate**  
**1½ cups ice cubes**

Put the milk, sugar, vanilla extract, and frozen concentrate in a blender. Combine at a low or medium-low speed. Increase speed to high and add the ice cubes, one at a time, through the jar cap's fill hole while the machine is running. Blend until smooth.

—Maryellen Driscoll,  
editor at large

## KITCHEN SKILLS



### How to string a pea pod

Sugar snap peas and snow peas have tough, stringlike fibers running along their top seams. It won't hurt you to eat them, but why would you want to when they're so simple to remove? Here's how:

Using your fingernails or the tips of your fingers, snap off the stem end of the pea toward the top seam, leaving the stringy part attached. The partially disconnected end will act as your "zipper pull."

Pull the disconnected stem end to remove the string, much as you would unzip a zipper. If the string breaks before you've removed it all, repeat the process using the blossom end of the pea.

—J. A.





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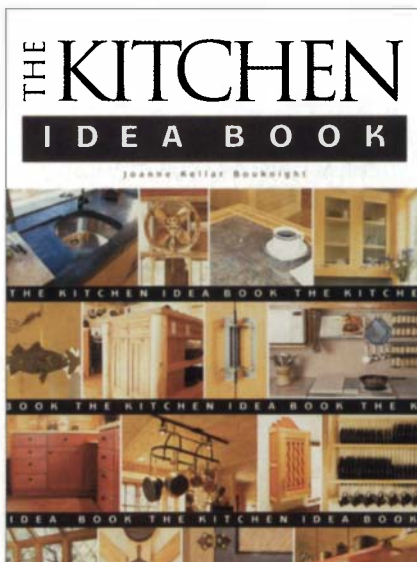
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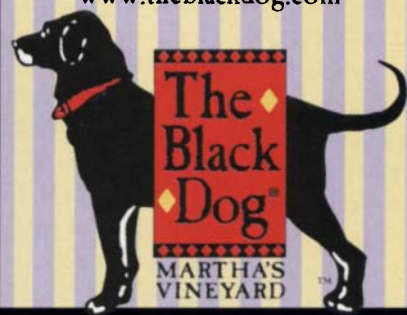
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## White-wine vinegars

**Y**ou probably don't give much thought to that bottle of white-wine vinegar in your pantry, but whether you're using just a few teaspoons to brighten a soup or whisking up your favorite vinaigrette, the vinegar has a big impact on the finished dish. We wondered just how much the flavor varies among different brands, so we held a blind

tasting of nationally sold white-wine vinegars with nine members of our editorial staff. Each vinegar was tasted alone and in a vinaigrette. Tasters evaluated the aroma, flavor, and balance of acidity and sweetness of each vinegar and evaluated how food-friendly each would be. The tasters' evaluations were compiled to reveal the ranking below. —M. D. & J. A.

### TASTING RESULTS

#### Editors' choice

##### DAL RACCOLTO

Bright and sharp without being harsh. Many layers of flavor gave this sunny, fresh-tasting vinegar a complexity that made it the hands-down favorite. (\$6.99 for 16.9 fluid ounces; 7.5% acidity.)



##### SPECTRUM ORGANIC

Well balanced, somewhat rounded, and pleasant, with a delicate finish. Had just the right level of tang without shouting its presence. (\$4.39 for 16.9 fluid ounces; 6% acidity.)



##### MAILLE

Sharp, with a lot of zip. An herbal quality to its flavor and a strong finish. Pleasant, but not particularly complex—and not for the faint of heart. (\$2.20 for 8.5 fluid ounces; 7% acidity.)



##### COLAVITA

Smooth, mild, rounded character, but could have stood a little more "oomph" in the flavor department. (\$2.39 for 16.9 fluid ounces; 6% acidity.)



##### REGINA

Caramel undertones like sherry vinegar, somewhat musty, and definitely watery. Diluted with water, according to the label. (\$1.89 for 12 fluid ounces; 5% acidity.)



##### MONARI FEDERZONI

Somewhat one-dimensional with a finish that comes to a skidding halt. Lacking balance and subtlety. (\$3.39 for 16.9 fluid ounces; 7% acidity.)





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## Getting the grit out of greens

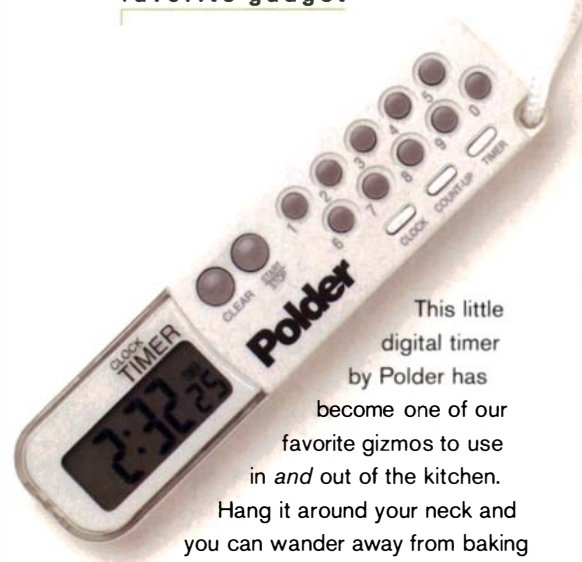
It only takes a few grains of sand between your teeth to ruin an otherwise fabulous salad. Lettuces and leafy greens are great at trapping soil in their leaves as they grow, so shortly before you make a salad or sauté some greens, wash the leaves as many times as it takes to remove the grit.

You need enough water for the leaves to float freely. Depending on how many leaves you're washing, fill either a large bowl or a disinfected sink with cool water. Add the separated greens, swish them around to loosen the grit, and then let them float undisturbed for a few minutes while the grit settles to the bottom. Lift the greens out of the water into a clean container, leaving the grit behind. Drain the sink or bowl and repeat with fresh water until no trace of grit remains. Don't pour the greens from the bowl into a colander: you'll just pour the grit back over the greens.

Water droplets clinging to cooking greens are fine and actually help steam the greens during cooking, but salad greens need to be dried thoroughly. (Wet greens will dilute your dressing, and they won't last as long if you're not using them right away.) The only really effective way to dry them is in a spinner. To store, pack the leaves loosely in a zip-top bag lined with paper towels, gently squeeze out most of the air, and seal.

—J. A.

## favorite gadget



This little digital timer by Polder has become one of our favorite gizmos to use in and out of the kitchen.

Hang it around your neck and you can wander away from baking a batch of cookies to fetch the mail or weed the garden. It's especially useful this time of year for outdoor grilling, where a timer is handy and the grillside table is already cluttered with other gear. Aside from its convenience, this is a favored timer in our test kitchen because the number buttons let you set the exact time without the usual nuisance of pressing hour, minute, and second buttons over and over. This lightweight timer (just 1½ ounces) will also count up like a stopwatch and tell you what time it is. A magnet on the back makes it easy to store on the refrigerator door. (\$14.95; for sources, see p. 80.)

—M. D.

## Pork loin vs. tenderloin

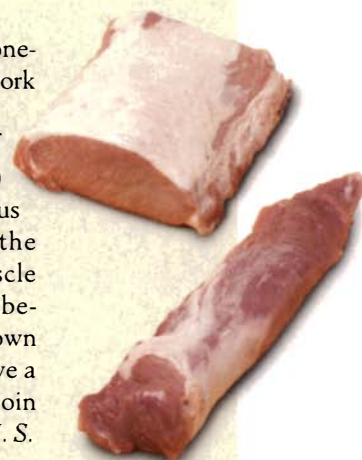
Pork loin and pork tenderloin are two similar-sounding market terms that represent quite different cuts of meat.

The pork loin is a large cut that runs along either side of the backbone, beginning just below the shoulder and continuing down to the leg. The loin is then further broken down into the many different chops and roasts that you see at the market. When a recipe calls for a pork loin roast, it's usually referring to a *top loin* roast, which many markets label as a *center-cut* roast. This type of roast is cut from the center of the loin where the meaty eye muscle is largest and

most uniform in shape. It's available both boneless (shown here) and bone-in. A boneless pork loin is about five inches across.

The tenderloin is a much smaller cut of meat (usually about two inches in diameter) from the loin. Prized for its tenderness—thus the name—and finely grained texture, the tenderloin is a single well-protected muscle that sits tucked underneath the backbone beginning just below the ribs and running down into the hip area. Chops and roasts that have a "T-bone" include both the tenderloin and loin eye muscles.

—M. S.





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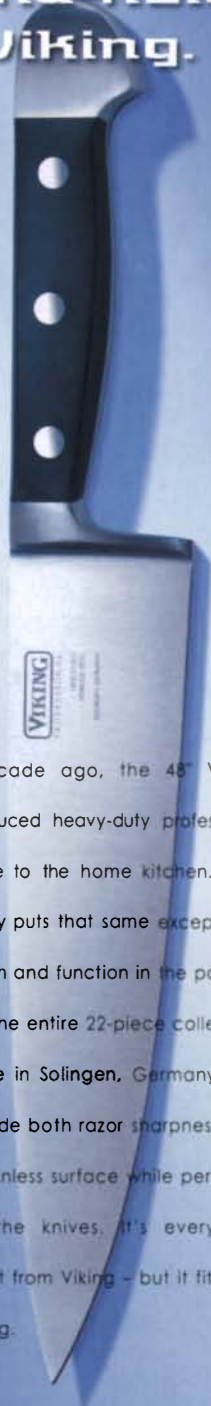
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ingredient

## Rice noodles

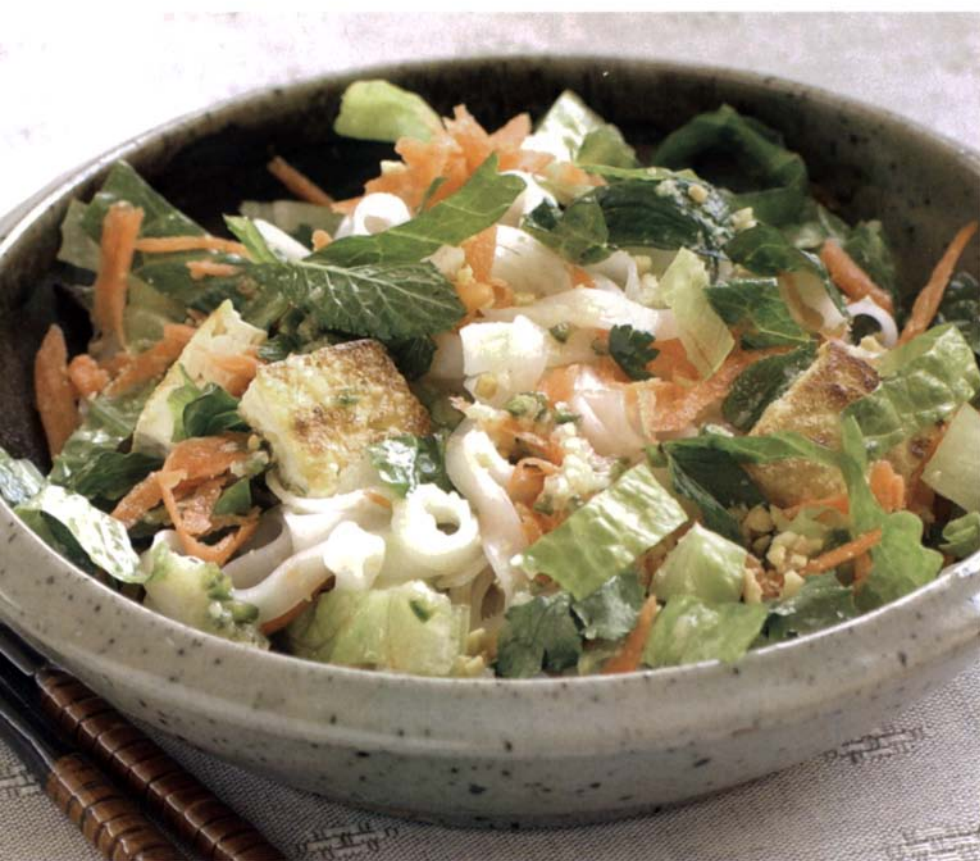
Check out the Asian section of your grocery store and you'll probably see an array of cellophane packages filled with rice noodles of all shapes. These simple noodles made from rice flour and water have a subtle flavor and an appealing springy-chewy texture, with just a slight slipperiness. They add body to lots of Asian-inspired dishes including stir-fries, soups, curries, and salads (see the suggestion below).

**WHAT TO BUY:** Also called "rice sticks," rice noodles come in various thicknesses: very thin ones ("rice vermicelli"); and flat, thicker ones that come in small, medium, and large widths, the widest being about the width of fettuccine. While vermicelli are often called for in soup and salad recipes and the wider ones in stir-fries, the sizes are pretty much interchangeable.

**HOW TO COOK:** I find that the easiest way to cook rice noodles is to just treat them like regular dried pasta and boil them (some packages call for soaking, but I don't find it necessary). Put the noodles in a large pot of boiling salted water and stir to unclump them. For thinner noodles, I start checking for doneness after about 2 minutes, even if the water hasn't returned to a boil. Thicker ones will take 3 to 6 minutes to cook. Do check often, as different brands cook at different rates.

As soon as the noodles are tender, I drain them and immediately rinse with cold water to wash off any starch. Then I fluff them and leave them to drain well in a colander, fluffing every few minutes to be sure they stay loose. (If you skip this step, you'll end up with one big tangle.) Now they're ready to drop into a hot soup just before serving, to toss into a stir-fry, or to use as a light base for a salad of fresh greens and herbs.

—Martha Holmberg, editor in chief



### Ginger-Lime Dressing for Rice Noodle Salads

*Yields enough dressing for an individual salad.*

I love to toss this dressing with boiled rice noodles, fresh greens, and fresh herbs to make an incredibly light and refreshing salad. I always use chopped romaine, fresh mint, and fresh cilantro, but I'll vary the other ingredients: bean sprouts, grated carrots, and chopped cucumbers all add crunch; fried tofu, grilled chicken, sautéed shrimp, or strips of leftover flank steak turn it into a more substantial dish. Add chopped peanuts for great contrasting flavor and texture.

- 1 teaspoon finely grated or very finely minced fresh ginger
- 1 to 2 teaspoons minced fresh hot green chile, such as jalapeño or serrano
- 1 small clove garlic, minced
- 2 tablespoons lime juice
- 1 tablespoon rice vinegar
- 1 tablespoon fish sauce
- 1½ teaspoons granulated sugar

In a small bowl, mix the ginger, chile, garlic, lime juice, vinegar, fish sauce, and sugar. Taste and add more of any of the ingredients to get an assertive but tasty balance of flavors.



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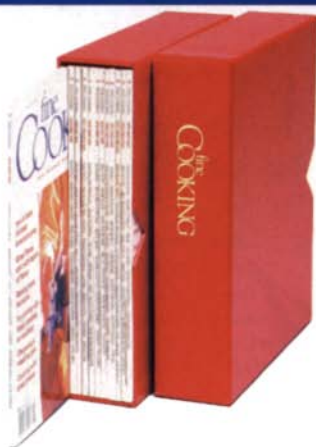
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**In Season pg. 14**

**Lee Valley Tools** (800-871-8158; [www.leevalley.com](http://www.leevalley.com)) sells plastic surgical scrubbers, two for \$1.

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sells the versatile Boerner V-Slicer for \$27.99. The set includes a blade base as well as various slicing and julienne inserts.

**Chef vs. Chef pg. 62**

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**Blueberry Desserts pg. 65**

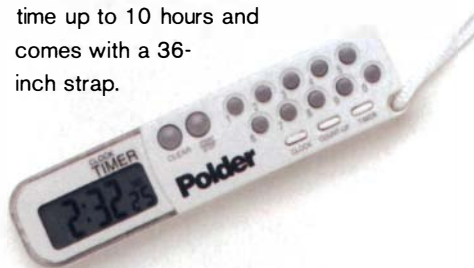
To find the brown Demerara sugar used in the blueberry sauce, try **King Arthur**



**Flour's Baker's Catalogue** (800-827-6836; [www.bakerscatalogue.com](http://www.bakerscatalogue.com)). A 1-pound bag is \$2.95.

**From the Test Kitchen pg. 70**

The Electronic Clock, Timer & Stopwatch from Polder is \$14.95 at Kitchen Emporium (888-858-7920; [www.kitchenemporium.com](http://www.kitchenemporium.com)). It can time up to 10 hours and comes with a 36-inch strap.



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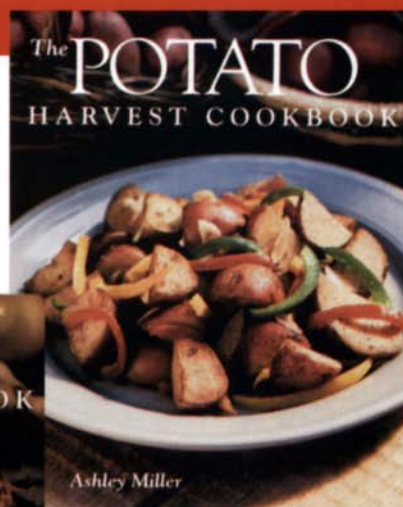
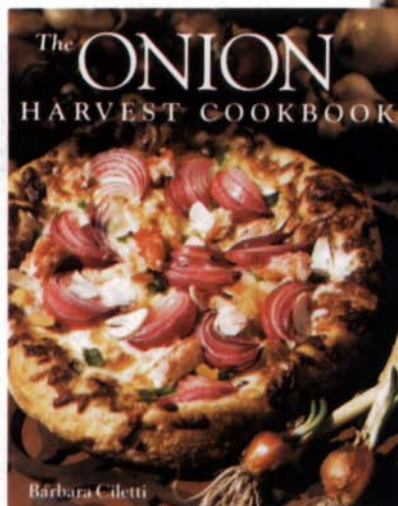
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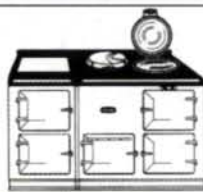
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# nutritioninformation

Recipe (analysis per serving)	Calories		Protein (g)	Carb (g)	total	Fats (g)			Chol (mg)	Sodium (mg)	Fiber (g)	Notes
	total	from fat				total	sat	mono				
Cuisines - page 24												
Jamaican Jerk Chicken	470	260	45	4	29	8	11	7	155	870	1	per serving
Pork Tenderloin - page 38												
7-6-5 Grilled Pork Tenderloin	280	80	39	10	9	3	3	2	110	1240	1	based on 5 servings w/chili glaze
Sweet Chili Glaze	40	15	0	6	1.5	0	0.5	1	0	10	0	per teaspoon
Rosemary-Orange Glaze	20	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	per teaspoon
Curry-Apple Glaze	25	10	0	4	1	0	0.5	0.5	0	0	0	per teaspoon
All-Purpose Salsa	35	0	1	9	0	0	0	0	0	230	1	based on 5 servings
Orange Balsamic Sauce	60	10	0	14	1	0	0	0.5	0	10	0	per tablespoon
Mango Chutney Sauce	50	0	0	13	0	0	0	0	0	220	0	per tablespoon
Pasta Salads - page 42												
Ditalini w/Tomatoes, Capers & Lemon Oil	240	60	7	38	7	1	4	1	0	390	2	based on 10 servings
Shells w/Arugula & Feta	270	90	9	36	10	3	5	1	15	470	1	based on 10 servings
Orzo w/Shiitakes & Caramelized Onions	260	70	8	40	8	1	3	3	0	450	3	based on 10 servings
Salad for Dinner - page 45												
Updated Chef Salad	270	140	24	7	16	6	7	2	130	800	2	based on 6 servings
Grilled Chicken Salad	300	200	18	10	22	7	11	2	65	740	3	based on 6 servings
Cobb Salad	270	150	17	12	17	7	6	2	120	690	4	based on 6 servings
Garlic Croutons	80	50	1	8	5	2	3	0	5	170	1	per ¼ cup
Lemon Poppyseed Dressing	100	100	0	0	11	1	6	3	5	90	0	per tablespoon
Balsamic Vinaigrette	90	90	0	1	10	1	7	1	0	135	0	per tablespoon
Creamy Black Pepper Dressing	60	50	0	1	6	2	2	2	5	135	0	per tablespoon
Fruit Crisps - page 50												
Peach & Raspberry Crisp	320	110	3	52	12	7	3	1	30	25	4	per serving
Grilled Vegetables - page 54												
Grilled Bell Pepper, Corn & Red Onion Salad	240	180	4	13	20	4	14	2	5	850	3	with 1½ Tbs. vinaigrette
Grilled Eggplant "Sandwiches"	100	60	4	5	7	2	4	1	5	280	2	per "sandwich"
Grilled Pepper, Eggplant & Onion "Topping"	100	70	1	7	8	1	6	1	0	730	2	per ¼ cup
Grilled Zucchini & Goat Cheese Roll-Ups	50	40	3	1	4.5	2	2	0	10	210	0	per roll-up
Sauces - page 59												
Asian Dipping Sauce	20	10	1	3	1	0	0.5	0.5	0	390	0	per tablespoon
Catalan Vinaigrette	60	60	0	0	7	1	5	1	0	85	0	per tablespoon
Chimichurri	60	60	0	1	7	1	5	1	0	65	0	per tablespoon
Chef vs. Chef - page 62												
Stir-Fried Shrimp, Sugar Snaps & Fennel	210	90	21	9	11	2	7	1	180	610	4	per serving
Risotto of Shrimp & Sugar Snaps	610	140	31	81	15	2	10	2	200	900	9	per serving
Blueberry Desserts - page 65												
Blueberry Ice Cream	230	130	4	23	15	8	4	1	150	45	1	per ½ cup
Blueberry Muffins w/Cinnamon Crumble	310	120	5	44	13	8	4	1	70	260	1	per regular-size muffin
Blueberry-Hazelnut Bars	120	70	2	13	7	3	4	0	20	30	1	per bite-size bar
Rustic Blueberry Sauce w/Cassis	20	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	per tablespoon
Quick & Delicious - page 86B												
Greek Salad	240	180	7	9	20	7	11	2	30	990	2	based on 4 servings
Caramel-Braised Cod	380	70	33	41	8	1	5	1	75	1280	1	with ½ cup rice
White Grape & Cucumber Gazpacho	230	130	5	21	15	3	9	2	10	390	3	based on 4 servings
Grilled Sausage & Onion Panini	580	370	23	30	41	11	23	5	65	1530	3	per main course serving
Garlicky Angel Hair w/Grape Tomatoes	280	150	9	27	17	3	11	1	5	500	2	based on 4 servings
White Bean & Artichoke Dip w/Pita Chips	230	90	7	30	10	2	6	1	0	480	6	based on 8 servings
Seared Rib-Eye Steak w/Summer Couscous	480	160	36	42	18	5	10	1	85	1190	5	per serving
Chinese Chicken Salad	460	240	39	19	26	5	13	7	85	1080	5	based on 3 servings
From Our Test Kitchen- page 70												
Classic Strawberry Banana Smoothie	110	5	2	25	0.5	0	0	0	0	20	3	per cup
Orange Slush	180	25	4	35	2.5	1.5	1	0	10	40	0	per cup

The nutritional analyses have been calculated by a registered dietitian at The Food Consulting Company of San Diego, California. When a recipe


gives a choice of ingredients, the first choice is the one used in the calculations. Optional ingredients and those listed without a specific

quantity are not included. When a range of ingredient amounts or servings is given, the smaller amount or portion is used.



A woman with dark hair, wearing a red spaghetti-strap dress and a necklace, is looking towards the camera. She is holding a small black handbag. The background is a bright window with sheer curtains.

**HATES FAT. LOVES DUCK.**

A close-up of a plate featuring several breaded ducklings arranged in a semi-circle, topped with a green sauce. To the left is a side of mixed vegetables including corn and peas.

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BY AMY ALBERT

**T**om Phipps grows more than fifty varieties of heirloom beans on his organic farm in Pescadero, California. Though the flavor differences between the varieties are subtle, the beans are beautiful to look at, and they're prized by chefs and home cooks alike for their fresh flavor, creamy consistency, and firm texture.

"Beans are what they eat," says Phipps, noting that a bean's variations depend as much on where it's grown as on its variety. He knows that there are many more varieties to be discovered, but that not all will thrive in the mineral-enriched coastal soil on his farm.

After twenty-five years of bean farming, Phipps has become something of a bean guru, though it happened by chance. "I started with just a few varieties, but then



## Growing the best organic heirloom beans

people began wanting more than just pinto beans," he says. "They started requesting this or that bean and bringing beans they'd found in faraway places, asking me to find out about them and grow them." In the process, Phipps has learned plenty of lore behind the beans, which can go by different names, depending on where they grow. "A lady from Minnesota once called asking, 'Do you have Goose beans?' For years, I looked and looked for Goose beans, and finally found out it's a type of white bean, probably wild, that migrant geese eat. One day her husband brought home a goose he'd shot. This was the bean they found inside."

—Amy Albert, senior editor ♦



**Colorful beans with colorful names. From the top are Borlotti beans, fresh from the pod; Autumn Bounty; Cranberry Mix (a Phipps specialty); and Calypso beans.**



## Guide to Fresh Herbs

From the piny accent of rosemary in a long-simmered braise to the bright top notes and green confetti fun of fresh chives sprinkled on potato salad, herbs lift the flavor and appeal of everything from soup to dessert. But cooking with fresh herbs can be tricky. You need to know how to choose the right herb for the dish, how to store and prepare it properly, and how to add it to the dish at the best time in the right form. We're offering all that information and more in this easy-to-use guide. Armed with so much know-how, you'll be ready to get the most from fragrant, colorful herbs in whatever you're cooking.

BY LYNNE SAMPSON



## Using fresh vs. dried

The flavor and aroma of herbs comes from their essential oils, which evaporate when exposed to heat and air. Some herbs lose much of their appeal when dried. This is true of basil, chervil, chives, cilantro, dill, parsley, and tarragon, which should only be used fresh, if possible. (These herbs can be frozen; see "Preserving herbs," at right.) More robust herbs, including bay, marjoram, mint, oregano, rosemary, sage, and thyme are still aromatic in their dried form, but the essential oils are more concentrated and in some cases can taste astringent. That's why, except for bay, you should use about one-third or one-half as much dried herbs as fresh. They can't offer the "wow" factor of fresh herbs, but dried herbs make convenient, aromatic additions to stocks, poaching liquids, soups, stews, sauces, and braises.

## Preserving herbs

**DRYING:** Bay, marjoram, mint, oregano, rosemary, sage, and thyme retain much of their aromatic quality when dried. You can dry your own store-bought or garden-grown herbs in a dry, well-ventilated space away from direct sunlight or a heat source. The best method is to dry the leaves on a screen, but herb bundles can also be wrapped in a paper bag and hung until brittle. This will take about three to five days (or longer), depending on the weather. Stem the dried leaves and store them, in covered glass jars, for up to one year.

**FREEZING:** More tender herbs, including basil, chives, cilantro, dill, parsley, and tarragon are best preserved by freezing. Some, like basil, will turn black, and all will lose their texture, but frozen herbs keep their fresh flavor for using in cooked dishes. They will last for up to six months using any of these three techniques:

- ❖ **Whole herbs:** Pack sprigs of clean, dry herbs in airtight containers or food storage bags and freeze.

- ❖ **Chopped herbs:** Roughly chop the herbs, pack them into ice-cube trays, fill the trays with water, and freeze.

- ❖ **Herb purée:** Purée herbs in a blender or food processor with just enough vegetable or olive oil to make a thick paste. Freeze in ice-cube trays or in small portions in food storage bags.

**HERB BUTTER:** Frozen herb butters will keep for up to three months so you can slice off a piece to top a pan-seared fish fillet or a steak, finish a butter sauce, or bring it to room temperature to spread on bread. Mix one stick softened unsalted butter with ¼ cup packed coarsely chopped herbs or more to taste. Roll into a cylinder, wrap in plastic, and freeze.

**HERB VINEGAR:** Herb vinegars have a long shelf life. Tarragon is the standard, but basil, chive and chive blossoms, dill, or rosemary infuse their flavors into mild white vinegar. Use herb vinegars in vinaigrettes and marinades or to add zest to cooked vegetables. Fill a glass jar with washed leaves or whole sprigs, pour in white-wine, rice-wine, or Champagne vinegar to cover, and set the jar in the sun for a week or until fully flavored. Strain into a clean bottle and seal; it will keep indefinitely.

## Growing herbs

Since nothing can replicate the flavor of fresh herbs, you might want to grow your own in a kitchen windowsill or in your garden. You'll not only have fresh herbs on hand whenever you want them, but you can try an unusual variety, such as Thai basil or lemon thyme. And when the chives, sage, and thyme come into bloom, the flowers will be yours for garnishing soups or decorating a salad. Most herbs can be started from seed, but you can buy plants for a head start.



## Mail-order sources:

**Johnny's Selected Seeds**  
207-437-4301  
[www.johnnyseeds.com](http://www.johnnyseeds.com)

**Lingle's Herbs**  
800-708-0633  
[www.linglesherbs.com](http://www.linglesherbs.com)

**Nichols Garden Nursery**  
800-422-3985  
[www.nicholsgarden-nursery.com](http://www.nicholsgarden-nursery.com)

**Richters**  
905-640-6677  
[www.richters.com](http://www.richters.com)

**Well-Sweep Herb Farm**  
908-852-5390  
[www.wellsweep.com](http://www.wellsweep.com)

**Shepherd's Garden Seeds**  
800-503-9624  
[www.shepherdseeds.com](http://www.shepherdseeds.com)



## Herbal infusions

When herbs are steeped in a hot liquid, they release their alluring flavors. This technique, like making tea, is useful when you want to capture the essence of herbs without any hint of greenery. Infusing rosemary, sage, or thyme into olive oil makes a fragrant condiment for drizzling on pizzas or for dunking bread. Infused cream or milk adds a subtle flavor to winter squash soup or mashed potatoes. For desserts, mint, bay, or basil are infused into cream for making chocolate truffles, whipped cream, or ice cream, and into sugar syrup for poached pears or sorbet. Savory or sweet, the method is the same: heat the oil, cream, milk, or sugar syrup to a simmer and add whole sprigs or leaves. Cover, remove from the heat to steep for 30 minutes, and then strain.



## Tips for cooking with herbs

- ❖ Wash, dry, and chop herbs just before use. They'll stay fresher and more potent that way.
- ❖ When substituting fresh herbs for dried, use two to three times more fresh than the amount of dried called for. For bay leaf, use an equal or slightly smaller amount of fresh for dried.
- ❖ The amount of herbs to use depends on quality and your own taste, but don't be shy about quantities, especially when infusing whole sprigs in a stew or soup. You don't want an herb to overwhelm a dish, but you do want it to add its character. Taste often and adjust amounts as you cook.
- ❖ Botany aside, in the kitchen, herbs can be grouped into two categories: hardy, which are tougher with an assertive and often resinous flavor, and tender, which are generally lighter and have more delicate leaves. Hardy herbs include bay, marjoram, oregano, sage, savory, rosemary, and thyme. Tender herbs include basil, chervil, chives, cilantro, dill, mint, parsley, and tarragon.
- ❖ As a rule, the hardy herbs are best when they have time to cook. Add whole sprigs, such as rosemary and thyme, early in cooking for soups, stews, and braises to add a bass note of herbal flavor; remove them before serving. For easy retrieval, tie the sprigs with kitchen twine and tie the end of the twine to the pot handle.
- ❖ Most tender herbs should be added toward the end of cooking, and very delicate herbs, like cilantro and chervil, are better added off the heat so their flavors don't dissipate. The stems of cilantro and parsley, however, release wonderful flavors during simmering in a stock, sauce, or stew.
- ❖ When you don't have the fresh herbs called for in a recipe, use basil, parsley, or thyme. These versatile herbs complement a wide range of foods.

## Handling fresh herbs

**BUYING:** Herbs are generally sold in bunches or in plastic containers. Look for herbs that are bright, crisp, and aromatic, and avoid those that are wilted or yellowing. Give them a sniff—there should be no moldy odor.

**STORING:** A little time spent when you get home from the store can add days to the life span of your herbs. First, take the herbs out of the plastic and shake off any excess water. Remove wire twists or rubber bands and pull off wilted or slimy leaves. Dampen a length of paper towel, wring it out well, and loosely wrap up the herbs. Put the wrapped herbs in a plastic bag, press out any air, and close tightly, or put the wrapped herbs in a plastic food storage box. Change the paper towels every few days. Try to store herbs in a warmer part of the

fridge, as very cold temperatures can blacken them. Most fresh herbs will last up to a week, with the exception of chervil, which will last only a few days. Bay, thyme, and rosemary can last for ten days or more.



**WASHING:** When ready to use, fill a bowl with cool water and gently swish the herbs to rinse off any grit. Lift them out and dry thoroughly in a salad spinner or blot between dishtowels.

### CHOPPING:

- ❖ A sharp chef's knife is best for chopping herbs; a dull knife will bruise tender herbs.
- ❖ To stem bunches of herbs,








such as parsley and cilantro, hold the stems in one hand and cut off the leaves. Pick out any large stems from among the leaves.

- ❖ To strip the leaves off of sprigs, like thyme, grasp one end with your fingers and pull in the opposite direction from which the leaves grow. Any tender stems that come off can be chopped up with the leaves.
- ❖ A rough chop is best for maintaining the flavor of herbs in most dishes. Overchopping will bruise the herbs and muddy the flavor. Finely chop herbs only when you want them to blend in, such as for a fine garnish or sauce.
- ❖ Large-leaf herbs, like basil and mint, can be cut into strips, called a chiffonade. Stack a few leaves, roll tightly, and cut across into strips.

# C<sup>fine</sup> Cooking

Fresh herbs are an integral part of good cooking. Choosing and using them correctly will guarantee that the special character of each herb will shine through. Refer to this chart of fourteen frequently used herbs when you have questions about which ones to add or substitute in a recipe and how to store, chop, and use them to bring out the best flavor, fragrance, and color.

Herb identification	Flavors	Handling tips	Good in or with
 <p><b>Basil</b>  <i>Ocimum basilicum</i>. Smooth, broad, bright green leaves growing in pairs on a thick stem. Most common cooking variety: sweet basil. Other varieties: opal basil, Thai basil, lemon basil, cinnamon basil.</p>	<p>Warm mint and clove with citrus and anise.</p>	<p>Leaves will blacken soon after chopping, so chop at the last minute. Use generously, adding toward the end of cooking or add fresh just before serving.</p>	<p>Versatile herb with a special affinity to tomatoes, fresh or cooked. Purée with olive oil, garlic, Parmesan, and pine nuts to make pesto. Pair with Mediterranean (especially Italian) and Asian ingredients. Chop or tear and add to vegetable soups, butter sauces for poached white fish, and tossed salads. Steep whole leaves in cream to spice up whipped cream for summer fruits.</p>
 <p><b>Bay</b>  <i>Laurus nobilis</i>. Thick, shiny, pointed oval leaf of an evergreen tree. Other varieties: California bay (not recommended).</p>	<p>Deeply savory with essence of nutmeg and warm spices.</p>	<p>Stronger fresh than dried. Bruise 1 to 2 whole leaves lightly to add at beginning of cooking. Be sure to remove before serving: the leaf edges can be sharp.</p>	<p>Use to create a savory flavor foundation for soups, stews, ragoûts, and braises. Include in a bouquet garni, along with parsley and thyme, for flavoring stocks and poaching liquids. Steep in milk or cream so its warm spice notes can perfume dessert custards.</p>
 <p><b>Chervil</b>  <i>Anthriscus cereifolium</i>. Fragile, lacy, pale green leaves clustered in threes.</p>	<p>Delicate anise with the mild pepperiness of parsley.</p>	<p>Fleeting flavor and color. Use liberally. Pick clusters of leaves or roughly chop sprigs and add to hot or cold dishes just before serving.</p>	<p>Use as a beautiful garnish and gentle complement to delicately flavored dishes, including cream soups (especially carrot), shellfish, lean white fish, eggs, and spring vegetables.</p>
 <p><b>Chive</b>  <i>Allium schoenoprasum</i>. Long, narrow, hollow bright green leaves; with edible pink bud clusters when in bloom.</p>	<p>Mild, fresh onion.</p>	<p>Use liberally. Finely chop, snip, or when available, separate flower buds, and add just before serving. Turns drab green when heated.</p>	<p>A pleasantly mild alternative to raw onion. Pair with potatoes, eggs, cheese, and cream. Use to garnish soups, salads, and sautéed vegetables, or smear into softened butter for corn on the cob.</p>
 <p><b>Cilantro</b>  <i>Coriandrum sativum</i>. Thin, rounded, toothed bright green leaves resembling flat-leaf parsley. Also called fresh coriander or Chinese parsley.</p>	<p>Tangy with citrus notes.</p>	<p>Use liberally. Chop roughly or use whole sprigs and add just before serving. Use whole stems to flavor stocks, and, when available, roots for curry paste. Flavor pales when heated.</p>	<p>Use as a cooling, zesty counterpoint to the spice in Asian, Latin American, and Indian dishes. Great with chile and lime. Adds brightness to fresh fruit or tomato salsas. Purée with garlic and oil, like a pesto, to serve with grilled shrimp or flank steak.</p>





## Dill

*Anethum graveolens*. Tender, feathery, blue-green fronds branching off a central stem.

Mellow parsley with warm spices.

Far less assertive than dill seed. Use liberally. Pick off whole fronds or roughly chop to add at the end of cooking or to use in cold dishes.

Most closely associated with Scandinavian and Eastern European cooking. Add to cold potato salads, cucumbers, and deviled eggs as well as hot potato soups, steamed beets or beet soups, omelets, and dishes enriched with sour cream. Pair with delicate meats like veal or chicken, and mild-flavored fish. Use in baked goods, including breads and biscuits.



## Marjoram

*Origanum majorana*. Soft, small, oval dusty green leaves arrayed along a tender stem. Most common cooking variety: sweet marjoram.

Bold, floral perfume with mint and pepper.

Flavors can be potent. Use judiciously. Pick whole leaves, chop roughly or finely to add toward the end of cooking. Not often used raw in cold dishes.

From the same family as oregano, but less assertive. A favorite in Italian cuisine, sweetly perfuming roasted meats, braises, and tomato sauces. Deepens flavors of beans, cooked mushrooms, and spinach.



## Oregano

*Origanum vulgare*. Small, oval, deep green leaves with fine hairs. Most common cooking variety: Greek oregano. Other varieties: Mexican oregano.

Very assertive and peppery with hint of pine.

Use judiciously, as it can taste antiseptic. Chop roughly or finely and add early in cooking. Sometimes used raw in cold dishes.

Known as the "pizza herb." Pair with lemon and garlic to create Greek flavors. Use to accent red meats, roasted chicken, or hearty dishes like moussaka and ratatouille. Use in zesty marinades and dressings for bold salads.



## Parsley

*Petroselinum crispum*. Vivid green toothed leaf clusters branching off a fibrous stem. Most common cooking varieties: Italian flat-leaf parsley and curly parsley.

Subtle, fresh celery and mild pepper.

Versatile and widely complementary. Use generously. Chop leaves roughly or finely and add toward the end of cooking or use uncooked. Save stems for stock. Keeps its color well so can be chopped ahead.

A centerpiece of Middle Eastern tabbouleh, French persillade, and Italian gremolata. Use as an all-purpose herb to add vibrancy to soups, sautéed vegetables, meats, and seafood. Use stems in bouquet garni for stocks, poaching liquids, and braises. Add leaves whole to salads or chopped as a fresh garnish to many dishes.



## Rosemary

*Rosmarinus officinalis*. Glossy, needle-like leaves densely clustered along a central woody branch.

Strong pine and fresh lemon.

Flavors can dominate and taste bitter. Use judiciously. Use whole sprigs or roughly chop needles and add early in cooking or add finely chopped toward the end. Not often used raw in cold dishes.

An excellent flavoring for grilled or roasted meats, particularly lamb, and roasted root vegetables. Team up with olive oil and garlic for marinades or toppings for pizza and flatbreads. Add whole sprigs to give piny potency to stews, roast chicken, or caramelized onions. Chop finely for use in stuffing, breads, and even desserts, such as shortbread.



## Sage

*Salvia officinalis*. Numerous thick, soft, oblong, silvery green leaves. Most common cooking variety: garden sage. Other varieties: purple sage, pineapple sage.

Potent, savory, and earthy.

Can dominate and taste medicinal. Use judiciously. Chop roughly or cut into fine ribbons and add at beginning of cooking. Not often used raw in cold dishes.

The flavor most closely associated with holiday stuffings. Pair with pork or veal for classic flavor combinations; use to add an earthy quality to onions, winter squash, white beans, and root-vegetable stews. Fry whole leaves in oil or butter to use as a tasty garnish.



## Spearmint

*Mentha spicata*. Oval, toothed and wrinkled bright green leaves. Other mint varieties: peppermint, apple mint, chocolate mint, pineapple mint.

Vibrant, cooling, and sweet.

Use liberally. Chop roughly or finely, or cut into thin ribbons and add toward the end of cooking or use raw.

The standard mint sold for cooking. Add to an array of savory dishes, from pasta to chutney; use to give a Mideastern or Indian accent. Traditionally used with lamb. Highlight fresh peas, new potatoes, and fruit salads. Infuse whole leaves in cream or milk for crème anglaise and chocolates; steep in boiling water to make refreshing tea. Use sprigs as decoration on dessert plates.



## Tarragon

*Artemisia dracunculus sativa*. Large, shiny, toothed dark green leaves resembling its daisy relative. Most common cooking variety: French tarragon. Other varieties: Russian tarragon (not recommended).

Sweet and spicy licorice.

Flavors can dominate. Use judiciously. Chop roughly or finely and add toward end of cooking.

Popular as an herbal vinegar for marinades and vinaigrettes. Use in French dishes such as béarnaise sauce and chicken with tarragon, but also a great partner for lobster, eggs, and spring vegetables.



## Thyme

*Thymus vulgaris*. Clusters of tiny green leaves on a thin, woody stem. Most common variety for cooking: English thyme. Other varieties: lemon thyme, caraway thyme.

Subtle pine and lemon and spice.

Versatile and widely complementary, but can overwhelm delicate foods. Use liberally but carefully. Add whole sprigs or chopped leaves at any stage of cooking. Not often used raw in cold dishes.

A uniquely adaptable herb for meats, seafood, and summer and winter vegetables. Use sprigs in bouquet garni to fully flavor stocks, sauces, and soups. Add sprigs to slow-roasted tomatoes, braises, and pasta sauces to add depth. Infuse sprigs in poaching liquids for fruit desserts and in cream for caramel sauce.

## Herb recipes

Here are four versatile recipes that show off the best aspects of fresh herbs—fragrance and color.

Use the following recipes as guidelines, adding or substituting different herbs according to your own tastes. Store your herb mixtures in airtight containers and use them within a few days.

### Persillade

*Yields about ½ cup.*

If you add lemon zest, this becomes Italian gremolata, the traditional garnish for ossobuco.

**1 clove garlic**  
**1 cup packed flat-leaf or curly parsley sprigs**  
**½ teaspoon grated lemon zest (optional)**

Finely chop the garlic and parsley with a knife or in a food processor. Stir in the zest, if using.

**Uses:** Rub on lamb or chicken in the last few minutes of roasting; top stuffed tomatoes or scallops and then broil; swirl into soups.

### Sage Brown Butter Sauce

*Yields ½ cup.*

A last-minute sauce with an earthy, herbal flavor.

**½ cup unsalted butter, cut into 6 pieces**  
**¼ cup loosely packed whole sage leaves**  
**Kosher salt**

In a small saucepan over medium heat, melt the butter. Reduce the heat to medium low. Add the sage and cook until the sage is fragrant and the butter solids turn nutmeg brown, 3 to 4 minutes. Season to taste with salt.

**Uses:** Use on roast pork, seared white fish, or squash ravioli; toss with roasted root vegetables, Brussels sprouts, or cauliflower.

### Mint Sauce

*Yields a generous ¾ cup.*

A sweet-and-sour alternative to mint jelly.

**½ cup roughly chopped fresh mint**  
**2 tablespoons light brown sugar**  
**3 tablespoons boiling water**  
**½ cup white-wine or Champagne vinegar**  
**Pinch salt**

Put the mint in a small bowl. Dissolve the sugar in the boiling water and pour over the mint. Add the vinegar and salt to taste. Cover and let stand at room temperature for about 1 hour.

**Uses:** Serve with roasted lamb or beef; drizzle on sautéed spinach or snap peas.

### Basil Oil

*Yields a scant 1 cup.*

A verdant green oil that is the essence of basil.

**½ cup packed fresh basil leaves**  
**1 cup extra-virgin olive oil**

Bring a large pot of water to a boil and fill a bowl with ice water. Dip the basil into the boiling water for 15 seconds, pull out with a strainer, and plunge into the cold water. Drain and dry the basil thoroughly with paper towels. Pack it in a blender and add the olive oil. Purée until the basil is very fine and the oil is bright green. Strain through a colander lined with cheesecloth set over a bowl to slowly drain.

**Uses:** Drizzle on fresh tomatoes, grilled fish, or vegetable soups; use in vinaigrettes or for dipping focaccia.





## Greek Salad

*Serves two as a main course,  
four as a first course.*

- 2 tsp. fresh lemon juice
- 2 tsp. red-wine vinegar
- 2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
- ¼ tsp. dried oregano, crushed
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 large ripe tomato (about 9 oz.), cut into chunks
- ½ cucumber, peeled and cut into large dice
- ¼ medium red onion, thinly sliced
- 8 to 10 large leaves from a heart of romaine lettuce
- 16 to 20 large mint leaves (from about 4 sprigs)
- 5 oz. feta cheese, cut into ¾- to 1-inch cubes
- 3 oz. black olives, such as kalamata (about ½ cup)

In a small bowl, whisk the lemon juice, vinegar, olive oil, and oregano with a fork; season with salt and pepper. Put the tomato, cucumber, and red onion in a salad bowl. Sprinkle lightly with salt (about ¼ tsp.). Give the vinaigrette a whisk, pour about 1 Tbs. of it over the vegetables, and toss lightly.

Wash and dry the lettuce. Trim the tops of the leaves if they're bruised or browned, cut the leaves lengthwise into 3 strips, and then across into large squares. Wash and dry the mint and cut crosswise into thin strips (you should have about ¼ cup, loosely packed). Add the lettuce to the salad bowl. Add one cube of feta to the remaining vinaigrette and mash with a fork. Pour over the lettuce and vegetables and toss. Add the remaining feta and the olives and sprinkle on the mint. Toss gently and serve right away.



## Caramel-Braised Cod

*Serves four.*

- 1 tsp. dried red chile flakes; more to taste
- ¼ tsp. salt
- ¼ cup plus 1 tsp. granulated sugar
- 1½ lb. cod fillets, 1 inch thick
- 2 Tbs. olive oil
- 3 Tbs. fish sauce
- Cooked jasmine rice or other long-grain rice for serving
- 1 scallion (white and light green parts), thinly sliced

Combine the chile flakes, salt, and 1 tsp. sugar in a small bowl. Rub the fish with half of the mixture and set aside. Combine the other half of the mixture with ¼ cup water, the oil, and the fish sauce; set aside.

Put the remaining ¼ cup sugar in a large, heavy-based sauté pan with straight sides and cook over high heat until the sugar starts to melt at the edges and turns

golden brown, about 2 minutes. Reduce the heat to medium when the sugar starts browning and stir energetically with a wooden spoon. When the caramel is a reddish mahogany brown (another 1 to 2 minutes), take the pan off the heat. Stirring gently, slowly add ½ cup water to the pan; be careful, as the caramel may steam or spatter. If the caramel doesn't dissolve completely, return the pan to medium heat and stir until dissolved. Stir in the fish sauce mixture.

Put the fish in a single layer in the sauté pan. Bring to a gentle simmer over medium-low heat and braise the fish, uncovered; use a soup-spoon to baste the fish with the sauce occasionally. After about 7 minutes, gently flip the fish and continue to braise and baste until the fish is opaque throughout, another 5 to 7 minutes. Serve with the sauce over the rice, sprinkled with the scallion slices.

## tip

♦ If your brand of fish sauce contains sugar, omit the sugar in the seasoning mixture.



### White Grape & Cucumber Gazpacho

*Serves four as a first course; yields about 3 cups.*

- 1/2 lb. seedless white grapes, well rinsed
- 2 slices white sandwich bread
- 1/3 cup sliced almonds
- 1 seedless cucumber
- 2 scallions (white and light green parts)
- 1 clove garlic
- 3 Tbs. fresh dill
- 2 Tbs. cream cheese
- 1/4 cup milk
- 1 to 2 Tbs. white-wine vinegar
- 2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
- Salt and freshly ground pepper (preferably white)

Put all but 4 of the grapes in a metal bowl and put it in the freezer. Tear the bread into chunks and chop it in a food processor until it's reduced to fine

crumbs. Put the crumbs in a small bowl, stir in 1/3 cup cool water, and set aside. Toast the almonds in a dry skillet over medium-low heat, stirring frequently, until deep golden brown, 10 to 12 minutes. Transfer to a plate to cool.

Meanwhile, prepare the other ingredients: Slice the 4 grapes in half. Cut off and discard the cucumber ends. Thickly slice the cucumber. Slice the scallions. Slice the garlic. Chop the dill.

In a food processor, chop the garlic and 1/4 cup of the almonds until very fine. Add the breadcrumbs and cream cheese and process until well blended. Add the cucumber, scallions, dill, milk, vinegar, and the grapes from the freezer. Process until puréed as finely as possible, 1 to 2 minutes. With the machine running, pour in the oil. Taste and season with salt and pepper. Serve garnished with the grape halves and the remaining almonds.

#### tip

❖ Because the grapes are chilled, this soup is cold enough to eat right away, but you can also make it ahead and refrigerate it for a few hours, if you like.



### Grilled Sausage & Onion Panini

*Serves four as a main course.*

- 1 large red onion, sliced crosswise into 1/4-inch disks
- 5 Tbs. olive oil
- 1 Tbs. plus 1 tsp. good balsamic vinegar
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 large ripe tomato (about 8 oz.), thinly sliced
- 8 slices (about 1/2 inch thick each) crusty Italian bread
- 1 clove garlic, smashed
- 4 links sweet or hot Italian sausage (about 1 lb. total)
- 1 packed cup arugula, washed (if the leaves are large, stem them)
- 2 to 3 Tbs. freshly grated parmigiano reggiano

Heat a gas grill to high. Drizzle the onions with 1 Tbs. oil and 1 Tbs. vinegar and season well with salt and pepper. Toss gently to keep the disks intact. Season the tomato slices with salt and pepper and drizzle with 1 Tbs. oil. Brush 2 Tbs. of the oil over both sides of the bread, rub with the smashed garlic, and season with salt and pepper.

Put the sausages and onions on the hottest part of the grill. Grill the onions, turning them a

few times, until they're browned and have softened to a limp texture, about 8 minutes. Grill the sausages, turning occasionally, until fully cooked (160°F on an instant-read thermometer), 10 to 12 minutes. Remove the sausages and let them rest. Grill the bread for 1 to 2 minutes on each side.

Dress the arugula with the remaining 1 Tbs. oil and 1 tsp. vinegar; season with salt and pepper. Arrange a small handful of the arugula and 1 or 2 slices of tomato over four of the bread slices. Slice the sausages in half lengthwise and lay them flat over the tomatoes. Lay a generous portion of the grilled onion rings and a sprinkling of parmigiano over the sausages. Top with the remaining four slices of bread. Slice the sandwiches in half and serve.





### Garlicky Angel Hair with Grape Tomatoes

*Serves two as a main dish or four as a generous side dish.*

Kosher salt  
1 tsp. plus 3 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil; more for the baking sheet  
2 pints grape tomatoes (about 20 oz.)  
4 large or 5 small cloves garlic  
Large pinch dried red chile flakes  
12 large leaves fresh basil  
5 oz. dried angel hair pasta  
Freshly ground black pepper  
1/3 cup freshly grated parmigiano reggiano

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Adjust an oven rack to the upper-middle position and heat the broiler to high. Line a large rimmed baking sheet with foil and rub it with oil. Toss the tomatoes with 1 tsp. oil and about 1/4 tsp. salt. Spread them on the baking sheet. Broil, shaking the pan occasionally, until they're cracked, very soft, and shrunken, about 20 minutes; they'll be blackened in places.

Meanwhile, chop the garlic and put it in a small saucepan, along with 3 Tbs. oil and the

chile flakes. Bring to a simmer over medium heat and cook until the garlic just begins to turn golden, about 1 minute. Remove from the heat and let the oil steep.

Stack the basil leaves on top of one another and roll them into a cigar shape. Slice across the cigar to create thin—but not ultra-thin—ribbons (about 1/4 cup).

When the tomatoes are done, cook the pasta until tender, 3 to 4 minutes. Drain the pasta and return it to the pot. Immediately toss it with the garlic oil and 1/2 to 1 tsp. salt. Grind lots of fresh pepper over the pasta, add the broiled tomatoes and the basil, and toss to combine well. Add half the parmigiano, toss again, and immediately turn out into warm bowls. Top with the remaining parmigiano.



### White Bean & Artichoke Dip with Pita Chips

*Serves six to eight as an appetizer; yields about 2 cups dip.*

4 pita rounds (7 to 8 inches), sliced into 8 triangles, each triangle separated into 2 pieces  
5 Tbs. olive oil; more for drizzling  
Cayenne  
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper  
1 can (15 1/2 oz.) cannellini beans, drained and rinsed  
1 can (14 1/2 oz.) artichoke hearts, drained and rinsed  
1 small clove garlic, chopped  
2 Tbs. fresh lemon juice  
3 Tbs. freshly grated parmigiano reggiano  
1 tsp. chopped fresh rosemary

Adjust an oven rack to the upper-middle position and heat the broiler to high. Toss the pita pieces with 3 Tbs. of the oil, a pinch of cayenne, and a generous amount of salt and pepper. Lay the pieces flat on two baking sheets. When the broiler is hot, put the pita pieces in the oven. After 2 minutes, flip them with tongs. Broil until crisp and browned, another 2 minutes. Turn off the broiler and let the chips sit for 2 minutes in the closed oven. Remove and let cool.

Meanwhile, in a food processor, blend the beans, artichoke hearts, garlic, and lemon juice to a smooth paste. With the machine running, add the remaining 2 Tbs. oil. If needed, add 1 to 2 Tbs. water to get a smooth consistency. Blend in the cheese and rosemary; season with salt and pepper. Transfer to a medium bowl, sprinkle with 2 generous pinches cayenne and drizzle with oil. Serve with the chips.

### tips

❖ You can make the chips a day ahead, cool completely, and store in an airtight container.

❖ You can also make the dip a day ahead and refrigerate it; bring it to room temperature before serving.



## Seared Rib-Eye Steak with Summer Couscous

*Serves two.*

**Kosher salt**  
**½ cup couscous**  
**1 Tbs. olive oil**  
**1 rib-eye steak (10 oz.), about ¾ inch thick**  
**Freshly ground black pepper**  
**4 oz. green beans (ends trimmed), cut into ½-inch lengths (about 1 cup)**  
**1 clove garlic, finely chopped**  
**6 oz. cherry tomatoes, halved or quartered if large (about 1 heaping cup)**  
**Lemon wedges (optional)**

Bring ½ cup plus 1 Tbs. water and a heaping ¼ tsp. salt to a boil in a small saucepan. Add the couscous, give it a stir, cover tightly, and remove from the heat.

Put a heavy-based skillet that's a bit bigger than the steak over medium-high heat, add the oil, and heat until very hot. Season the steak generously with salt and pepper and put it in the center of the pan. Add the beans, shaking the pan so they settle in the spaces around the meat. Sear the meat for about 3 minutes on one side, turn it, lower the heat to medium, and continue to cook about another 3 minutes for medium rare, 5 minutes for medium. Don't move the steak around as it cooks, but shake the pan occasionally to brown the beans on all sides. Transfer the steak to a cutting board and tent it with foil. Leave the beans in the skillet.

Increase the heat to high, add the garlic, tomatoes, and about ¼ cup water, and cook until the tomatoes give off some juice and start to collapse, 1 to 2 minutes. Scrape the pan to dissolve any of the browned bits. Season with salt and pepper and remove from the heat.

Uncover the couscous, fluff it by scraping it with a fork, and then fold in the beans and tomatoes. Taste for seasoning. Put a pile of couscous on each plate; cut the steak into thin slices and arrange them over the couscous. Pour any accumulated meat juices over the couscous and serve with the lemon, if using, to squeeze over all.



## Chinese Chicken Salad

*Serves two to three as a main course.*

**2½ cups thinly sliced red cabbage (about ½ medium head)**  
**½ cup shredded carrots (about 1 large carrot)**  
**⅓ cup thinly sliced (on the diagonal) scallions (about 4, white and green parts)**  
**1 tsp. plus 3 Tbs. low-salt soy sauce**  
**3½ tsp. granulated sugar**  
**Kosher salt**  
**1 clove garlic**  
**1-inch piece fresh ginger, peeled and sliced**  
**¼ cup packed cilantro leaves, plus 1 Tbs. chopped**  
**3 Tbs. creamy peanut butter**  
**1 Tbs. fresh lemon juice**  
**2 Tbs. peanut oil**  
**1 lb. thinly sliced chicken breast**  
**⅓ cup toasted sliced almonds or chopped peanuts**

In a bowl, combine the cabbage, carrots, scallions, 1 tsp. soy sauce, 1 tsp. sugar, and a big pinch of salt. Set aside for 20 minutes, tossing occasionally.

In a small food processor, chop the garlic and ginger. Scrape the bowl with a spatula, add the ¼ cup cilantro and chop thoroughly. Scrape the bowl, add the peanut butter, 1 Tbs. hot water,

the lemon juice, 1 Tbs. oil, 3 Tbs. soy sauce, and 2½ tsp. sugar. Pulse until well combined, scraping the bowl as needed.

In a large skillet over medium-high heat, heat 1 Tbs. oil. Season the chicken pieces with salt and put them in the hot pan (in batches, if necessary). Cook on one side until the edges are white (1 to 2 minutes); turn and cook until just firm, another 1 to 2 minutes. Transfer to a cutting board and stack them in one or two piles; let rest for 3 to 4 minutes. Slice the chicken into generous ¼-inch strips and put them in a large bowl. Squeeze the cabbage mixture well and add it to the chicken, pour in the dressing, and toss well to combine. Divide among four plates and garnish with the remaining cilantro and the toasted almonds or peanuts.